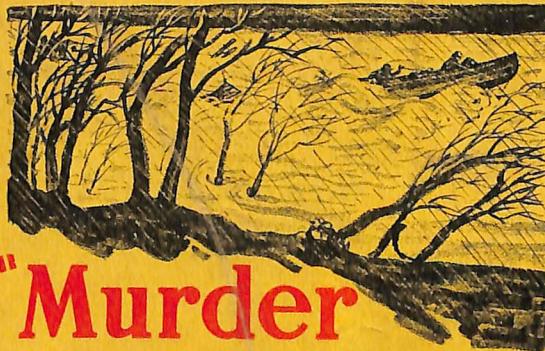


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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XXXVI

Saturday, October 20, 1928

NUMBER 4

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This Magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada

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Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

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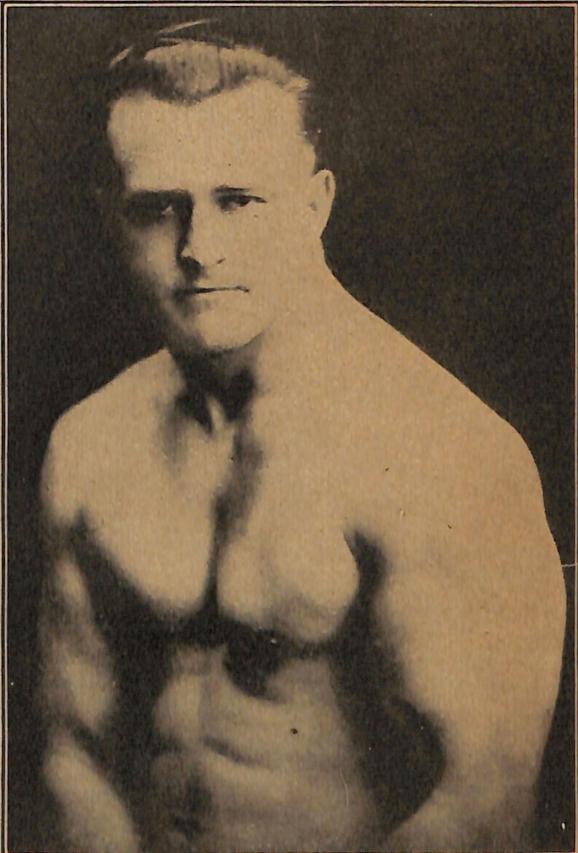
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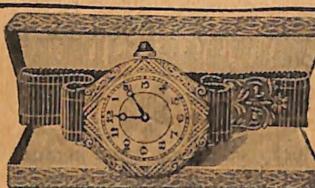
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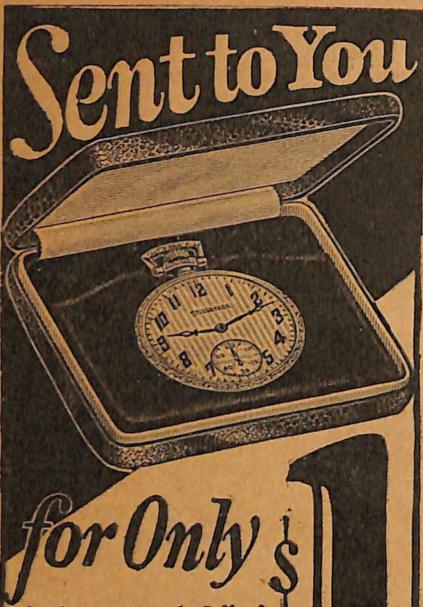
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81x4	3.50	1.65	32x5	4.25	2.65
82x4	3.50	1.75	32x4 \times 40	2.65	1.40
84x4	3.50	1.75	30x5.25	3.95	2.40
82x4 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.95	2.15	31x5.25	4.25	2.50
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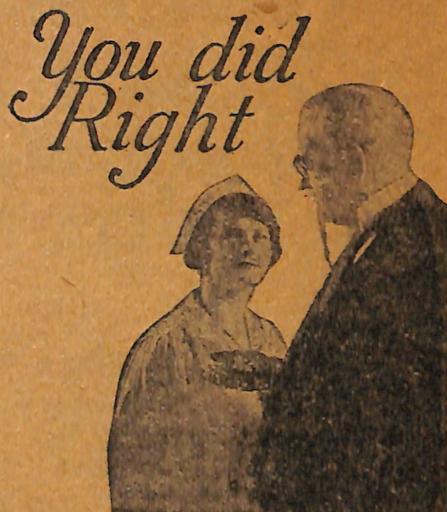
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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



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"Uncle Cato give me money? Hell! That's good!"

When Fate Wants a Man

Gangdom's Guns Spit Death When Tug Norton Undertakes to Guard Flash Santelle, the Million Dollar Crook

By Edward Parrish Ware

CHAPTER I

In Search of a Nephew

THE freckled youth who may be found on duty in the reception room of the Kaw Valley offices, when not more agreeably engaged, ambled into my private room one morning and dropped a card on my desk.

"Old gent," he remarked. "White hair; blue eyes. Looks like a million smackers. Better see him, boss. He's meat-on-the-table."

I glanced at the card:

MR. CATO SANTELLE

Memory clicked to the surname, Santelle, but Cato didn't register. The

Santelle whom every cop in the town was worrying over, regulars and privates, bore the given name of Cletus. Of course there might easily be other Santelles around, though the name was not by any means a common one.

"Dish the meat up, Spec," I ordered. "And don't spill the gravy."

Spec gave me a wise look, and vanished. A moment later Mr. Cato Santelle came in. Amplifying Spec's description, I'll say that he was a benevolent looking old gentleman who bore many marks of prosperity prominently exposed, among them being a diamond stud of three-carat proportions, a platinum watch chain, and a gold-headed stick.

His clothing was above reproach, and his demeanor was pleasing. At my invitation he sat down.

"How can I serve you, Mr. Santelle?" I inquired.

"I want to find my nephew," the old gentleman stated. "I have reason to believe that he is at present in Kansas City, but have no idea where."

"And your nephew's name?"

He gave me a steady look—a sort of challenging look, I would call it—when he answered:

"His name is Cletus Santelle."

"That name is rather well known here and elsewhere, Mr. Santelle," I commented, concealing my surprise. "Am I to understand that it is the nationally known Cletus, or Flash, whom you seek?"

The old man bowed. "It is," he said, a note of sorrow in his voice. "Cletus Santelle, my dead brother's only child, is a victim of untoward circumstances. He is no more a criminal than I am—and my life has always been free from guilty conduct of any sort."

"He has, I'll say, made something of a name for himself, whether he's enjoyed the game or not," was my comment. "Just what is your reason for seeking him now? Have you tried to locate him before?"

"I have," was the reply. "I came from my home in Australia, two years ago, and for the purpose of finding my brother, Cletus, or his heirs if he had died since emigrating here. Imagine my surprise and horror when I learned that the only representative of the Santelle family in America was my nephew, an infamous lawbreaker!"

"That was a cruel blow, Mr. Norton. In fact, I couldn't believe that Cletus, my dead brother's son, could have fallen so low as the New York authorities pictured him. It could not be the same Cletus."

"Yet I had finally to admit that it could be no other. His pictures are simply replicas of what his father appeared when at his age, and his accounts of his parentage, given to the police of New York, identified him beyond doubt."

"I began searching for him, and under a tremendous handicap. I dared not advertise, since I knew it to be likely that my movements would be watched by the police, and that advertising might lead to unfortunate results."

"From time to time I heard of him in certain places, and I always hastened to whatever city it was at the moment, and endeavored to get track of him by employing the services of private detectives. A week ago, while in Birmingham, I heard that he was in this city, and I hastened here. That is my story, Mr. Norton."

"And when you locate him, if you do—what?" I asked.

"I am wealthy," Mr. Santelle replied, "and I shall provide him with everything his heart desires—make up to him in good deeds the fearful tricks Fate seems to have played him. Cletus Santelle," he said impressively, "is my only living relative, and heir to my fortune, which is in excess of two million dollars. That is why I wish to find him."

I gasped mentally, but only mentally. The prospect might dazzle even Flash

Santelle, and cause him thenceforward to tread the straight and narrow—fairly straight and fairly narrow, I mean.

"What makes you believe him innocent of all the charges against him?" I asked.

"If guilty, why have the officers not succeeded in convicting him? Even one conviction would be convincing. But they have never done so. Is it reasonable to think that a man could be guilty of so many crimes, in so many different places, and never leave positive proof behind him?

"Stuff and nonsense! My nephew has been terribly mistreated! I know it! I want to find him and give him a chance to look the world in the face and say in its teeth: 'I am a Santelle. No better blood flows in the veins of kings. I am an honest, upright man, and you are liars—all liars!' That, Mr. Norton, is the one wish of my life!"

"And it does you great credit, Mr. Santelle," I applauded warmly. "But whether or not Flash will click to it—"

"Sir!"

I checked myself and offered, apologetically:

"Sorry. But I'm not his uncle, mind you, and can't quite get the slant you have. I'm hoping you're right, and that is the best I can say. As for finding your nephew, that should be easy. As a matter of fact, he has been found by, and closely watched by, practically the entire police force already."

"I should say that he is to-day the most 'found' man within the city limits. It would be a shame to take money for finding him for you, since he is already so well—"

"Mr. Norton!" the old gentleman exclaimed, leaning forward, tears flushing his eyes. "If you will bring about a meeting, in private, between me and that poor, abused boy, I will hand you a fee of one thousand dollars—and with it the blessing of an old man whose happiness will be almost too great for words!"

And that from the man whom the

godless Spec had referred to as meat-on-the-table!

CHAPTER II

Flash Santelle

FLASH SANTELLE began his criminal career in New York City, so far as the records go. He was, according to the police, an adaptable crook, trying his hand at everything, getting away with everything he tried. But no act of his ever landed him in jail in New York for long at a time, because the police were never able to prove anything on him. Therefore the cops, tiring of him, made it so hot for him he had to depart and remain departed. They couldn't jug him, so they, in effect, banished him.

Every large city in the country knew him later, and in some of them the police nearly pinned him to the pasteboard. But nearly is as far as they got. So far as is known, Santelle did time in none of them.

Finally he chose Kansas City. The cops knew about his arrival, for Kansas City's sunken garden has its stool pigeons, just like other cities. But what could they do about it? There was absolutely nothing against him—and, so long as he wasn't caught at something crooked, he was as free to come and go as any other citizen.

The cops couldn't do anything. Santelle knew it. The cops knew it. They located him at a luxurious but shady hotel on East Twelfth Street, a place favored by high class crooks, and watched him with an ardor that would have shamed that celebrated cat at the rathole. But nothing came of it.

Santelle, a medium-sized, dark-skinned, gray-eyed man of about thirty-five years, was, in so far as his conduct showed, a man of leisure who chose to while away the time by reading, visiting theaters, dining well, and occasionally conversing with persons who happened to arouse his interest.

Not at all different from many other wealthy loafers in the city.

Now it appeared that he was to be taken out of danger's way by a fond old fool of a relative, and I was to be an instrument promoting his salvation. That one-thousand-dollar fee looked good to me, and I took the commission.

The clerk at the Hotel Croydon, on East Twelfth, was an old friend of mine, regardless of the fact that I had been instrumental in obtaining for him a two-year vacation at Jeff City while I was on the force. Abe Hopkins was not one to bear malice.

He greeted me affably when I approached the desk on the afternoon of Cato Santelle's visit to my office.

"Hello, Tug Norton," Abe welcomed. "How's tricks? The old Kaw Valley still flourishing?"

"Like the green bay tree, Abe," I assured him. "But I'm not here on business, exactly. Not looking for anybody to pinch, I mean. Is Flash Santelle still honoring you with his patronage?"

"Absolutely," Abe returned. "Mr. Santelle is one of our most esteemed guests. He's in his apartment right now. Want to see him?"

"Yeah. Got nothing on him, Abe, understand. A business matter that he may or may not click to, but I want to have a chance to put it up to him, anyhow. Fix it."

Five minutes later I was ushered into Flash Santelle's sitting room, and Santelle was extending a strong, white hand. I shook, and sat down.

"You're Norton, of the Kaw Valley Detective Bureau," he remarked casually, also sitting. "Heard of you, of course, but hope that our little chat is to be a pleasant one. Hopkins said you had a business proposition to make me. I'm ready to hear it, Mr. Norton."

A pleasant spoken chap, and rather pleasing in appearance. A swell dresser, too, without being in the least loud and flashy. Looked like he might

be a professional man of some kind—a lawyer, say, and prosperous. None of the earmarks commonly present in a hardened crook. I was impressed.

"I can put the proposition up to you in a few words, Santelle," I told him. "It isn't mine, but I'm acting as agent in the matter. Did you ever hear anything about having an uncle in Australia?"

He raised his brows slightly in surprise, stared at me for a moment, then said:

"My father used to mention a brother who lived in Australia somewhere," he replied. "Why do you ask?"

"He's here, and looking for you," I stated bluntly. "Rich as goose-gravy, convinced that you're on the square and always have been, wants to weed you a big bunch of honest kale and stand by while you convince the world, and the police departments in it, that you are just a nice little woolly lamb upon whose snowy fleece some cruel persons have thrown a pot of crude oil. Fine old gentleman, is Uncle Cato, I'm thinking. Innocent as lemon pop, and effervescent with good intentions."

"Now, here's the frame-up: Uncle Cato commissioned me to arrange a meeting in private between you and him. He's genuine, and I'm genuine—in this matter at least. He produced documentary evidence enough to convince me. Do I return to Uncle Cato with glad tidings—and collect a fee? Or do I dash his hopes, and charge the work I've done so far in the matter to sweet charity?"

Santelle smiled, showing perfect teeth. His eyes twinkled, then his face crinkled, and he burst into hearty laughter.

"You're good, Norton!" he exclaimed, after the paroxysm was over. "Good—but not quite good enough. I've got an uncle in Australia, if he hasn't passed on to his reward, and his name is Cato. But that old bird wouldn't remain five minutes in the

same town with me if he knew I was there. Why, man, he's so Godly—if my old man told it right when he used to yarn about Cato—that he wouldn't hesitate a minute to execute his own son, if he had one, if the said son went crooked. Give me money, and stand by me! Hell! That's good!"

"Try something more plausible, Norton, old fellow," he said good-humoredly, glancing significantly toward the door. "Glad to see you again some time—if you've got a real laugh for me, like the one you slipped me this time. I enjoy laughing, and there is seldom anything really amusing happening nowadays. You'll excuse me?"

I didn't argue with him. Just took myself off, but stopped and dropped a few words into the ear of Abe.

"Tell that fresh crook, Santelle," I requested, "that I'm on the level, Abe. That when I put up a proposition to a man I mean it. Tell him I'll be back to-morrow morning—with maybe another laugh for him. Will you get that to him?"

"Sure, Tug," Abe agreed. "Anything you say."

To make it short, it took me four days to earn that thousand dollar fee, and I *earned* it, too. Santelle was as shy as a quail in nesting time. He just naturally couldn't bring himself to believe that I wasn't spreading an elaborate snare for him, and it required the combined influence of Abe Hopkins and half a dozen others among my crook friends to finally convince him that I could be trusted.

I banked that thousand on the morning of my fifth day's labor.

CHAPTER III

Cletus Settles Down

THEY met in the privacy of Uncle Cato's apartment at Kansas City's classiest hotel. I don't know what was said and done during that first contact, because I left them stand-

ing and staring at each other, after I had inducted Flash.

The following day the papers had something to tell the public. They did the telling in big head lines. Why not? Anything authentic concerning Flash Santelle was news in big, black letters. Also, Mr. Cato Santelle was undoubtedly a big card for the news-hounds. He furnished the human interest stuff in great gobs. His long hunt for his nephew, and his childlike faith in that nephew's innocence—all that was played up with billowing frills. Also, it may be added, Uncle Cato's reputed millions didn't detract any from his news value.

On the whole, it was a pretty and romantic story. It had the ring of truth in it. Certainly Uncle Cato was a God-fearing, earnest and indefatigable champion of his young nephew, be that nephew sinner or sinned against. Cato made a distinct hit, as was quite natural.

As for Flash, many people believed that he had been a much abused person. Why shouldn't they? Had the police ever convicted him of anything? Certainly not! And is there not a great and undying truth to the effect that murder will out? Nothing ever had "outed" on poor young Cletus Santelle, so far as the police records of the country could show. Cletus Santelle's stock skyrocketed with some folks, believe me!

Uncle Cato's joy knew no bounds. He could hardly bear Flash out of his sight. That made it necessary for him to remove from the classy hotel referred to, of course. No first-class hostelry could take a chance on harboring Flash Santelle. Uncle Cato was all right, but some other hotel could have the honor of entertaining Flash—and welcome.

But Uncle Cato and Flash didn't have to seek quarters at the Croydon, or any other place where the young man would be thrown again into the evil atmosphere from which he had so

recently been rescued. There was, in Kansas City, one man at least with a heart in him. That man came forward.

The following day the papers announced that Mr. Cato Santelle and nephew, Cletus Santelle, were house guests of Mr. Anderson Bailey, president and general manager of the Bailey Importing Company, at his home in the Country Club section of the city.

Mr. Anderson Bailey was an important person in Kansas City. He was known to possess a million dollars for each letter in his name, including the Mr. He opened his huge mausoleum to the Santelles and furnished them with an asylum.

It is a mere waste of words to tell you that the women of the town, young, not so young, middle-aged, and plain old, fell for Flash. I'll dismiss the subject by saying that they toppled over like so many dominoes in a row. No blame to them. These birds with a past are certainly the honey-coated flypaper.

Then, a week later, came the announcement that Uncle Cato had purchased a residence in the vicinity—and it was none other than the Willow Bend property up on the Kaw. To call it a residence certainly betokened modesty on the part of somebody. Willow Bend was not a residence at all. It was an estate.

"I have decided that it is best for the present that my nephew shall live in something approaching complete retirement. Deep wounds require time for healing—if they ever are healed. Fortunately, it is not necessary for Cletus to exercise the fine talents he unquestionably possesses in a business way. I have settled an adequate income upon him, and Willow Bend will shortly become his property. In the meantime, we shall go into seclusion." That was the way Cato put it.

"Yeah," Chief Enger, of the local police, commented bitingly when he scanned that statement. "Yeah, and

Uncle Cato will be damned lucky if this seclusion stuff doesn't turn out to be oblivion for him. Financial oblivion, at least. Why, confound it all, he'll be lucky if within the next six months he ain't drawing on charity for the necessary coffee—and!"

I had my own opinion, of course, but didn't express it. Whichever way the cat jumped, Tug Norton was in the money.

I dismissed Cletus Santelle from my mind, having other things to think about. But the police didn't dismiss him—not at all!

Queer, isn't it, how obstinately skeptical the police are about a crook reforming?

CHAPTER IV

Dog Eat Dog

AFFAIRS at Willow Bend seemed to go forward nicely indeed. Cletus was seldom visible off the grounds, but Cato proved to be a good mixer. One had only to look once at his smiling, happy countenance to know that everything was lovely with him. The inference was that everything was also lovely with Flash, too, because Flash was the biggest interest Cato had in life. People came, in time, to take the Santelles as a matter of course, which was to be expected.

Cops from all directions slipped in and out of Kansas City, each and every one of them having a pronounced interest in Flash Santelle. But, since not one of them had anything on him that they could make stick, the Santelles were undisturbed.

Then came a day, about three months after I'd forgotten about the Santelles, when I happened to be alone.

Cletus Santelle tapped on my door—tapped, and entered directly afterward.

"Pardon me," he apologized smilingly, "but there was no one to announce me, so I took a chance and came right in. Is it all right? Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"Take a chair, park your hat and stick," I invited.

"I'm aware, Norton," he began, "that you're not buying any Cletus Santelle stock, looking for a rising market, but I take it that you are too fair-minded to let personal prejudices interfere with business. Am I right?"

I nodded. "Got a job for me?"

"Yes."

"So long as your proposition is on the square, Santelle, I'll take your money. Unbosom yourself," I invited.

"I'm being blackmailed," he said, after a bit, looking at me with a serio-comic expression in his keen eyes. "Funny, isn't it? But it is a fact. Before my uncle and I were brought together through your kind offices, I lived rather a haphazard sort of life. Perhaps you've heard rumors, now and then, about the sort of existence I mean?"

"Yes," I said gravely.

"Well, as you must know, a chap meets a lot of queer customers, first and last, when dwelling in that vast estate commonly termed the underworld," he continued. "One is forced at times to become very familiar with persons one would shun most willfully if it were a matter of choice.

"Naturally, I made acquaintances. Then came my uncle; good fortune, so long a stranger, tapped me familiarly on the shoulder—and I promptly became a shining mark for blackmailers."

He ceased there, and his handsome features hardened. Then he was all smiles again.

"Yes," he resumed, "the blackmailers scented me. Plenty of chance, too, you'll allow, seeing how much advertising I got through the papers here and elsewhere. I have been, in the past, something of a public character, Norton, as you may have heard. Letters came to me from parties who hungered to have a share of my presumed wealth, and not one of the writers seemed to care anything about the ethics of the thing.

"Naturally, being something of a student of the processes of the criminal mind myself, as you may have heard, I destroyed these letters in the order of their arrival. They weren't worth bothering about.

"But one came to me last week, mailed at St. Louis, which differs somewhat from the others. This fellow means business. You see, Norton, I happen to know him. One of the undesirable acquaintances, you understand.

"Of course his signature isn't affixed, but there is sketched upon the page at the bottom a sort of design that is enlightening. This chap is shy a thumb and a little finger, both off the left hand. A neat sketch of a man's hand, so mutilated, identifies the letter with the man. Do you follow me?"

A case of dog eating dog, eh? For the life of me, I couldn't help feeling a sneaking liking for the polished, friendly chap, even though I knew that his pretense of honest respectability—thinly laid on before me, by the way—was a pretense only. What the devil was he up to?

I merely nodded, my face giving no hint of my thoughts.

"Glad you do," he commented. "Well, Norton, this chap demands a cool fifty thousand dollars, else he will carry out certain designs upon my person which will result in totally unfitting me for further activities in this life. That is the gist of the letter.

"Understand me, Norton," he went on, his face serious, "I am not one to tremble at shadows—nor at anything else, for that matter. The truth is, I need help only because during the coming week I shall be pretty well occupied with other things than watching for the three-fingered assassin to try his stuff. Otherwise, I assure you, I'd give him plenty of rope—and then jerk the rope at the proper moment. Unfortunately I must forego the pleasure I'd get out of playing a hand against him, and for that reason I'm asking you to sit in the game."

That surely gave me a laugh—a quiet laugh, 'way down deep!

CHAPTER V A Pair of Forty-Fives

FLASH SANTELLE grinned broadly. The thing was serious, of course, but there was a certain humor in it that could not fail to appeal to him.

"The situation, as you outline it, seems to offer possibilities for excitement, as well as amusement," I commented. "Suppose you spill it all, explaining just how the Kaw Valley can aid you in the emergency."

"I want you to assign two thoroughly reliable, intelligent men to the case," he replied promptly. "They are to be near me night and day. Put me to bed at night, as it were, and take me up in the morning. The day man must be one who can mingle with my guests as one of them, of course."

"There is to be guests, then?" I commented. "How many?"

"About a dozen. Anderson Bailey and daughter, Marthe, Roscoe Patterson, wife, son, and daughter, and several out-of-town friends of both families, to mention a few. It is to be a house party extending over a week. Judge, then, how necessary it is to guard closely against anything unfortunate, such as my three-fingered correspondent threatens, happening during the week. Can you supply such men as I need?"

"Sure," I replied. "I've got a fine assortment, Santelle. One in particular, a near-graduate of a correspondence school of prominence, the name of which slips me just now, who could loaf all evening in the lobby of the Ritz and never attract attention. His middle name is Etiquette.

"He'll do you proud in the rôle of mingler, and Jim Steel, my right-hand man, will absolutely guarantee to take care of any one attempting to violate the privacy of your bedchamber, and

do it without even disturbing your slumber. When do they report?"

"You're not spoofing me?" Flash queried, evidently shying off on account of my clumsy attempt at light comedy. "This thing is serious, old chap."

"Flash," I said soberly, and in absolute sincerity, "you are about the last man on earth I'd undertake to kid. My manner of speech does not always indicate my real sentiments. If I take your money I'll earn it in a manner absolutely satisfactory to you, or I'll give it back."

His face cleared immediately, and he laughed. "It seems like old times, that 'Flash,'" he was good enough to say. "All that is behind me, though, thanks to the kindness of Uncle Cato."

"And we report when?" I repeated the question.

"Monday morning. The guests will begin arriving in the afternoon. You will want your men to have a chance to look over the ground, of course. Send them along as early as you can. Now, as to the fee?"

I named it, and he paid it. That was satisfactory. Jim Steel and Art Garrett would deliver what had been bought, and no mistake about it. Reliable, efficient, I could always trust that pair.

"By the way," I was reminded as Flash arose to depart, "the letter from your old acquaintance, the three-fingered party—got it with you?"

"Yes," he answered, taking out a note-case. "Clear forgot to submit it. A sort of exhibit to prove my case eh?" he finished good-naturedly.

"Do you blame me?" I came back.

"Not in the least. You will discover, let me earnestly assure you, that I'm genuine in the matter. There is no bug under a chip, and so far as I'm informed, nothing dead and unburied in Denmark. I'm on the level when I tell you I need help."

The letter bore him out. It exhibited a St. Louis postmark, had been laboriously picked out on a typewriter, and

its contents jibed with what Flash had told me, even to the sketch at the bottom of the page.

"I'll have my men on the job early Monday morning. Anything else?" I queried, returning the letter.

"That about covers everything," he replied. "Thank you. Glad to be able to do business *with* you, I'm sure."

I didn't miss the emphasis he put on the "with," and the grin he gave me at departing left me chuckling in real enjoyment. Whatever else Flash might be, he certainly was a pleasant, understanding chap.

I often wonder, as I review the case of Flash Santelle, what the outcome of the next week would have been had my plans gone according to schedule. They did not, however. Art Garrett, cast for the rôle of mixer, got into an unfortunate argument, in the course of duty, with a proprietor of a night club—and the proprietor beamed him with it. That put Art in a hospital, and me in a hole. But not in the hole for long.

There simply had to be a mingler present at Willow Bend, in order to carry out my contract, so, lacking a better one, I attired myself in a dress suit and a pair of forty-five's, and decided to mingle.

CHAPTER VI

The Cast Assembles

JIM STEEL indulged a hot line of entertaining comment while I arrayed myself that Monday night at Willow Bend—entertaining to him, I mean. I could have managed without it.

What Jim didn't know was that I'd had a fling at a manner of living outside his ken, long before I ever saw him, and the claw-hammer duds were not exactly being introduced into my career for the first time that night. I'd performed in 'em before, and nobody had ever called for the hook. Nobody would have occasion to on this appearance, either. But Jim didn't know that.

"Talk about things you know something about," I told him, beginning the process of spoiling my fourth tie. "For instance, what did you learn while strolling over the fields, among the daisies and the daffodils, to-day?"

Jim had reached Willow Bend early that morning, I joining him in the afternoon. It had been up to him to get the lie of the land and then report to me.

"For one thing," he began, "this is about the loneliest location I ever happened on. A mile from the highway, and in the middle of about six hundred and forty acres of land. Not a neighboring chalet to be seen. River makes a bend and skirts the north side of the tract, but where the willows are I haven't been able to determine.

"Back of the house, clear to the western limits, lies a good deal of cultivable land. All the rest—about one-fourth of the whole—is trees, hills and hollows.

"A path, pretty well grown up in weeds after it leaves the lawn, leads from the front door down through the hollows to the boathouse. Lot of boats there, including a couple of high-powered launches. So much for the topographical survey.

"We now pass to the domestic observations. Uncle Cato's butler is a reformer crook—and, if I'm any judge of such matters, he was badly in need of reformation when he took down with it. Hard-looking customer, but appears to know butting clear down to the grass roots.

"There are two chauffeurs, a boatman, two gardeners, a footman, two maids, a cook, and a party that calls himself a farmer. He looks the part. That is about all I have learned, and observed, up to date.

"But that ain't saying I haven't got a few ideas about this business that can stand airing," he went on. "Take it from me, this Flash is framing something. He's a crook, from the cradle to the grave. Smooth, I'll admit, but

that's what has kept him alive and out of jail—smoothness.

"I saw him perform when the Baileys arrived—and on the path to the boathouse afterward, when there was only one of the Baileys visible. I mean the daughter and sole heir. It's been a long time since I made any love to anybody, but I'm still able to recognize signs when I see 'em."

"Not saying, mind you, that this Flash is in love with the girl—not a bit of it. But she's all mired down in it herself. Had hold of one of his arms with both of her hands, and clinging like the well-known wistaria. Eyes all shiny, face flushed, drinking in his line of bull with eyes, ears, and all the rest of her senses—except maybe that sixth one we hear so much about. Trouble there, Tug—for the girl and old man Bailey. Maybe for Flash. Watch 'em."

"Anything else?" I grunted, besting the tie at last.

"Ain't that enough?" Jim demanded truculently. "Remember, I ain't been here a week. Just part of one day."

"That's a fact, now you mention it, Jim," I agreed. "Now, get this: Don't do any night time snoozing while you're guarding Flash. You can sleep all you want to in the daytime. I'd suggest that you provide yourself with a lot of light literature—Henty, Oliver Optic, and the like. Something that won't tax you too much. Settle down in Flash's sitting-room, which is admirably situated for the purpose of watching the only door leading onto the corridor. The bedroom has no exit except through the sitting-room."

"Read, but don't fall asleep while doing it. Tell Flash, if he gets inquisitive, that I've ordered you to watch over him carefully, and that you can't carry out the order while doing a Morpheus."

"Get this, too: If Flash leaves that bedroom, after he has announced his intention of retiring, you go with him. My orders again, if he objects. Don't

let him out of your sight, except in the bedroom. I'm thinking he won't try anything like that, but you never can tell."

"Frankly, I believe that he is on the level about this job he's given us—but, again, you never can tell. Report to me, of course, every morning, when you come off watch."

I buckled on my six-guns; then, as an afterthought, added a derringer to my equipment. It was hard indeed to associate the smiling, debonair, good-looking Flash Santelle with anything evil, but, as I had just said to Jim, you never can tell.

"How's the scenery?" I asked, after I was fully geared.

Jim surveyed me critically—pretty much as a trader does a horse which he is mighty suspicious of—and replied:

"O K, except that you bulge a trifle over each hip. But that will be laid to avoirdupois, rather than hardware, I reckon. On the whole, and considering who they're on, the glad rags do the tailor proud."

"Don't forget and split the tails of the coat when you sit down. You might expose your rear attachments, and them cannons certainly ain't good taste in polite society, and the other is that such ain't being done. Sit right down on the tails, and let the presser take care of the wrinkles—"

"I merely asked for an opinion, Jim," I interrupted, "and not a whole statute by the supreme court en banc. Time for dinner, I see, so you'll have to say the rest of it to yourself. Remember me, old man, about an hour from now—when you're scoffing with the rest of the servants."

I made an exit on that, and strolled leisurely down the stairway and joined a group on the big veranda. I'd been introduced at tea time that afternoon and, so far as I knew, had stood the test. So I wasn't worrying any to speak of.

Uncle Cato was relating something funny, as I approached, and the group

about him did him the honor to laugh appreciatively. They were a cultured and high-toned lot, those guests.

Old Anderson Bailey was paying a good deal in the way of lost social prestige by backing young Mr. Cletus Santelle to the extent of taking him and his uncle up, but he could afford to do as he darned well pleased—and did do just that, on all occasions. He was a bull-headed man, to put it mildly.

His laugh was loudest, and a hand rested friendly upon Uncle Cato's off shoulder.

Besides his money, Anderson Bailey had something else to distinguish him. A daughter. The girl—about twenty years old—was a blonde, but not the type called dizzy. She was a little slip of a person, slender and graceful, with lots of honest yellow hair, and a pair of big, violet-colored eyes that seemed to be always laughing. If I'd been a trifle older, I'd have loved her like a father.

She had been christened Martha, but later on changed it to Marthe. She'd have changed the family name, too, the story goes, but came squarely up against the old man's veto when she tried it. She desired it spelled Baillie. The old man wanted it to remain Bailey—and it remained. That episode surely ought to furnish a fair line-up on Marthe.

Roscoe Patterson, a cattle baron of a past era, then a retired magnate of some kind, had a good-looking wife, a fair-looking daughter—and a son who was the real article.

Tommy Patterson was a tall, athletic chap of twenty-five—and a heman with it. Went through the business overseas. Started in a private, and came out a top-sergeant. Roscoe's money and influence might have obtained for Tommy a grand stand seat, thereby making the war much quieter and a lot safer for him, but the young man wouldn't have it that way. As a result he saw the ruckus with his naked eyes, instead of through binoculars. A likable youngster, from all accounts.

There were others of the cast present, of course, but I'm not going to dwell much on any except the principals. There were two more women and three more men in the minor rôles, and that's attention enough for them.

Dinner was announced directly after I appeared, and I had the pleasure of pairing off with an empty-headed lady who either had an impediment in her speech or hadn't learned to talk, for she gave me little trouble in a conversational way, and that enabled me to listen in and do a lot of observing.

Say what you please, people give away a lot about themselves when they're eating—and that applies to those for whom knives, forks and spoons have no mysteries, as well as to the hand-to-mouthers.

CHAPTER VII A Sealed Letter

I HAD an arrangement with Santelle whereby I was at liberty to run into the city after the evening frolic was over, returning along about noon the following day. Business in the office had to be looked after, making such a deal necessary. Had I known when Flash made his bid for my services, that my crack mingler would not be available, I would have turned the job down. I explained that to him, and he made no objection to my daily excursions into town.

I had no uneasiness about absenting myself from the place, because I was leaving a good man on the job. One I could trust as I would myself—and that's saying a lot. Jim Steel would take care of the situation during my absence.

About one o'clock on the morning following my first evening as a mingler at Willow Bend, which proved to be rather entertaining but not at all exciting, I motored in with one of Flash's launches. The Kaw had no mysteries for me, and I was as much at home in a motor boat as I was in a rocking-

chair, so night running was a real pleasure.

At ten o'clock that morning, just as I was beginning to get ready to depart up river again, Spec brought word that a woman wished to consult with me, but refused to send in a card. I scented business at once.

The ones who come cardless, make you promise never to reveal their identities, usually turn out to be anything but triflers and time wasters. They can be counted on to produce liberally, I've learned. I had her in.

A tall, slender young woman in very neat and fashionable attire, she proved to be—and a beauty. Spanish was her type.

Just enough of the foreigner about her to make her attractive in a mysterious, romantic way. She wore jewels, too, but not too profusely; just enough for good taste.

"You wish to remain incognita?" I queried, after she had taken a seat. "If so, please give me an alias—any you choose will be all right with me. Something to call you by. If I do not take your case, you will remain unknown. If I accept it, I shall require your real name. Are you willing to proceed with that understanding?"

She gave me a steady look out of big, brown eyes, smiled a trifle wanly, and spoke:

"My business with you can hardly be regarded as a 'case,'" she informed me. "But it may be one later. I have a sealed letter," she went on, "which I wish to intrust to your care. I wish you to place it in your safe and leave it there until this hour to-morrow morning. If I have not called for it, or have not communicated with you by that time, you will open the letter immediately. You will then have a case, as you term it."

"Should I call for the letter, you will return it to me intact, and then forget about it. Is that agreeable? Will you accept?"

I nodded. She went on:

"You may put my name down as Ayra Banning," she instructed. "It may or may not be an alias, which, I take it, is neither here nor there. What is your charge for the service?"

I named it, and she handed me a pad of bills and a letter. The letter, in a long envelope, was considerably thicker than the pad of bills, I'll add. A moment later she was gone, leaving behind her a haunting sense of mystery, and the scent of lilac perfume.

I put the letter away; then, on thinking the matter over, decided to learn, if possible, how this mysterious, hypnotic beauty happened to pick on the Kaw Valley for her commission. With that end in view I called up Chief Enger. He was, and is, a bountiful source in the matter of clients.

"Did you send me a mysterious, Spanish-type beauty this morning, chief?" I queried.

"Show me a beauty, Spanish, Hungarian, Fijian or plain Siwash, Tug, that ain't mysterious, and I'll buy you a new lid!" Enger came back. "What's the trouble? Somebody been leading you astray?"

"Not lately," I replied. "Didn't send me a client this morning, then, I take it?"

"No."

"All right. Good-by!"

Funny, isn't it, how meeting with obstacles makes a fellow all the more eager to climb? Makes me that way, anyhow. I wasn't so very particular about that Spanish-looking woman until Enger told me he knew nothing of her. That served to sharpen my curiosity.

Then I reached a sort of solution. During the Santelle episode, newspapers all over the country had somewhat widely advertised Tug Norton and the Kaw Valley. We took a prominent part in the play, at the start, and figured in the accounts of the matter. Most anybody who had not already established relations with a sleuthing or-

ganization in Kansas City would be inclined to consult with me, if needing a detective, thanks to that same advertising. That might account for the woman's picking me.

"This woman," I reflected, as I sped up the Kaw, "probably is staking her life on the outcome of a problem that will be answered before ten o'clock tomorrow morning. If she gets the wrong answer, then some hotel or boarding house will call up the police department and order an ambulance to remove a beautiful, Spanish-type woman who has bumped herself off. Then I'll open the letter and know all about it."

I've known it to happen that way before, and this case had all the earmarks of a to-be-opened-in-case-of-death affair.

I let it go at that.

"Everything serene," Steel reported when I reached Willow Bend. "This promises to get monotonous, Tug, if you ask me. That Cletus bird is mighty congenial, and makes it mighty easy to keep watch on him—suspiciously easy—but I like a little action now and then."

I didn't reply to Jim right then. He had said something that gave me pause. So like what had touched a remote corner of my own reasoning machine. Suspiciously easy. That was the phrase.

Was Flash Santelle, for reasons best known to himself, deliberately establishing espionage upon himself? If so, what could be his reason?

Then the answer came to me in a flash.

"An alibi!" I ejaculated. "That's it, Jim—an alibi!"

"What's an alibi, and why?" Jim demanded, examining me critically.

"Never mind that just now," I replied. "But bear down hard on this night-watch business," I instructed with emphasis. "Watch not only Santelle, but each and every person with whom he comes in contact. If my

alibi theory is correct—well, it'll be a good alibi, and no mistake!"

CHAPTER VIII

A Young Man in Trouble

JIM, somewhat disgusted over my secretive tactics, departed for bed, and a moment later I was hailed by a tall young man on the lawn. It was Tommy Patterson.

"Norton," he said quietly, a smile struggling with a somewhat serious expression on his face, "whom did you come out here to detect? Has my old man been hiring somebody to watch mother, or is it the other way about?"

That was my cue to cry "Discovered!" in a deep, chagrined voice—but I did nothing of the sort.

"If there is anybody in the Patterson family who needs watching, it's you," I told him, grinning. "From the looks of things, based on my observations last night, you'll be ready to commit murder pretty soon. Why the devil don't you either marry the girl or quit thinking about her in that way?"

The smile vanished from his lips, and his face was immediately shrouded in gloom. "That's why I called to you," he informed me seriously. "Wanted to talk with you, I mean, about what you refer to. Recognized you the minute you showed up yesterday, Mr. Norton," he went on to explain, "but since your being here is none of my business, I have not mentioned it to anybody. Don't intend to, if you request me to keep it quiet."

"I'll be glad to talk with you, and I do want you to keep your knowledge about me to yourself," I told him. "What's on your mind?"

He led the way to a bench which was out of view from the house, and we sat down.

"I don't like this business about Santelle," he informed me without apology or preamble. "No matter what his uncle may be, he himself was,

and no long time back, one of the most notorious and elusive crooks in all crookedom. A man doesn't reform so suddenly, if you ask me. He's working some kind of a racket, I'll bet. Not that I care about that. What I'm interested in is his butting in between me and my girl. That's what's getting me hot under the collar—and damned hot."

"I figured that out," I told him. "How long has it been going on?"

"It began when all that goo was being circulated about this poor, misunderstood crook of a Flash Santelle!" he replied hotly. "Aroused her interest—and then her old fool of a dad takes him right home and makes him one of the family! Can you beat that?"

"No," I replied. "Can't even equal it. But that shouldn't worry you much, I'm thinking. Miss Bailey is just taken with a passing fancy—"

"Hell!" Patterson exploded. "I thought you were a man of good sense! You are talking just like dad—and as for him, well, it's a good thing for sis and mother and me that he made his money in a day when it didn't require much besides brawn and a little cow-sense to do it! A passing fancy, eh?" he mimicked. "Tell me this, how long does it take for these so-called fancies to pass? And what about the bird that is waiting for the passing? How about his feelings?"

"Go on," I urged. "You interest me, Tommy. I'll admit everything you say, and imply. Spill yourself."

"I mean to," he snapped, his face flushing. "I love Marthe, Mr. Norton—and I'm willing to tell the world I do! She seemed to care a lot about me, too, until here lately. Enough to wear my ring and set the date for next June. That much, anyhow. Now she has returned the ring, and the only especial interest I now have in the coming of June is the fun I may get out of watching the June bugs. So, you see, I happen to be the 'passing' fancy in the case. What do you say to that?"

"I say that you have some cause for complaint," I acknowledged. "Still, it could be worse. The girl isn't Mrs. Cletus Santelle yet—and not likely to be. Have you any reason to think that he has serious intentions in regard to her?"

"He'd better have!" Tommy blazed. "If he's got any other kind of ideas, and I find it out, I'll drill him with about a ton of hot lead! Taking my girl away from me and making her Mrs. Santelle would be bad enough, but the other—"

"You don't get me," I interrupted soothingly. "I mean do you not think it quite possible that Santelle is merely humoring the young lady's infatuation, if it has gone that far, with no intention of using it in any way? Couldn't that be possible? Must there be—"

"Have you ever spent a few minutes even in company with a girl like Marthe Bailey?" he demanded. "I guess not, or you wouldn't make such damned fool cracks. She's the kind men take to—young or old. And she's wild about this redeemed crook. Talk sense!"

"Well," I conceded, "we'll grant that she is wild about him, and that he couldn't resist her if he wanted to. What then? What can be done about it? Got anything to suggest?"

"That's the undiluted hell of it!" he groaned. "I haven't!"

I felt sorry for Tommy. At the age of twenty-five they take such things hard. I did, I distinctly remember. The perfume of June roses, mingled with the smell of raindrops in the dust of a country road—

I came back with a jerk, and considered Tommy. June roses and raindrops in the dust were playing hell with him just then, and he needed help.

"Look here, young fellow," I told him, "I'm with you in this. Not just in the rôle of a sympathetic watcher, understand, but in that of a willing helper. I haven't got much stomach for such as Santelle, crook or redeemed

lamb, hooking up in any way with a nice girl like Marthe. What do you suggest?"

Tommy Patterson raised his face from his hands, and his fine eyes flashed. "Thank you, Mr. Norton," he said gratefully. "I need help. As for a suggestion, what about this: Prove that Flash Santelle is still a crook, and that all this rubbish about reformation is part of a well laid scheme—and do it before the affair between him and Marthe results in something that can't ever be remedied. That's what I suggest."

As a suggester, that boy was something of a whang! But I offered no change or amendment.

"That's a large order, Tommy," I said quietly. "But maybe it can be filled. Here comes Santelle and Miss Bailey now," I broke off to inform him, as the pair came into view up the path leading from the house to our bench. "Talk about dogs, or horses, or something."

I thought for a minute that I'd have to throw Tommy and hogtie him, but by the time the strolling pair were within hearing of us we were discussing the chances of the Blues for a pennant that season. They bowed to us and went on down the path.

"Now beat it," I ordered the young man, "and we'll talk again to-morrow. Don't commit suicide, except as a last resort, and maybe you'll be glad you didn't. Give old man Norton a chance to straighten things out. That's all he asks."

Tommy, somewhat more cheerful, departed—and I sat down to do some sure enough thinking.

CHAPTER IX

A Trifle Odd

AMILLION dollars for each letter in his name—and "Anderson Bailey" employs quite a number of alphabetical characters, to say nothing of the Mr.

That was the thought about which my mental tendrils clung when I finally left the bench and set out for the house. But the idea that Flash Santelle had framed such a thing wouldn't exactly wash. If he was in bad faith about this redemption business, then it was reasonable to think that he had designs on Uncle Cato's millions, rather than the strong-box belonging to Bailey. As for being in love with the young woman—well, I couldn't picture Flash in love with anybody to the extent of giving himself in marriage to her.

A smart crook doesn't fall for any woman very hard. If a crook does fall, then he becomes just a crook and is no longer entitled to be called smart.

Flash Santelle had proved himself one of the smartest crooks the sunken gardens had ever known. In no instance had the police ever been able to connect him with women. That is the reason he got by so long and so easily. No woman to betray him.

Now it stood to reason that Santelle, if still a crook, was not going to entangle himself with Marthe. Not a bit of it. Too smart for that. In which case Tommy Patterson need not worry about his love affair, in so far as Flash was concerned.

On the other hand, if Santelle had really decided to tread the straight and narrow, what would be more natural than that he should fall in love with a girl whose father had so many millions as had Bailey, and marry her?

And if he decided to marry Marthe, and Marthe seconded the motion, who could stop him? Anderson might try, of course, but he was the sort who backed a man without reservation or didn't back him at all. He had come out strong for Flash, and doubtless would not kick very hard against a marriage between his daughter and him. Anderson Bailey was just that sort of man, and might even welcome the union in order to further prove to the world that he was a mighty fine judge of men.

So much for the tangle involving Marthe, Flash and Tommy.

As for the other phase of the Santelle case which I had expressed to Jim in the word alibi, I wasn't any clearer. If Flash feared that something might be pulled in or around Kansas City, something crooked, and that he'd fall under suspicion—which would not be unlikely, considering who he was and that he was on the ground—having indisputable proof that he could not have had a hand in it would naturally be mighty helpful to him. I could see that.

But Flash couldn't hire the Kaw Valley to keep watch on him forever, that was certain, even if he could stand such espionage himself. Therefore, if my alibi theory wasn't just a dud, the danger that threatened Flash would not be a threat after the passing of the present week.

That conclusion would argue that he had private advices that something big would be pulled that week—which didn't ring true with me.

So I had to come back to the situation as Flash had detailed it to me in my office. A certain three-fingered party was after his meat, and, being tied up with company at the time, he desired a little help in the matter of protection.

After all, couldn't a reformed crook, or even one who had not resolved to do better, hire a detective for a legitimate job without laying himself open to suspicion on account of it? It stood to reason he could.

But there was a certain question in my mind, having lodged there the evening before, which gave me some heavy thinking. It was this:

Why had not Santelle, if in fear of trouble from a blackmailer, arranged for his servants to guard him and the grounds? That probably doesn't make much impression the way it's put, but consider this:

Flash Santelle's domestic establishment numbered eight males, and every

one of them young enough and husky enough to make it hot for anybody who came prowling around the premises. The butler, as I knew, had been a hard-bitten bird in the past, and I'd have hesitated to tackle him myself, even in his present supposedly pacific character. His chauffeurs were mighty powerful looking men, and young, as were his footman, gardeners, valets—in short, Flash seemed to have surrounded himself with servants of a somewhat unusual type.

Also, what the devil did Santelle find for such a staff of servants to do? He entertained but seldom, and his family numbered only himself and Uncle Cato. How did Flash manage to keep so many able-bodied men busy?

Having all the men help his establishment boasted, why go out and hire a pair of sleuths to stand guard over him? That struck me as being a trifle odd. Had he wanted a mystery unraveled, the sleuths would have been logical. But that wasn't the case. Flash merely wanted a pair of guards—and that was something entirely unnecessary, everything considered.

There was a black boy hanging around the woodpile at Willow Bend or I'd lost my ability to scent 'em.

With that conclusion in mind, and resolving to be even more alert than usual, I joined the guests for a boat trip up the Kaw, which killed the rest of the afternoon.

CHAPTER X

Footprints

TOMMY PATTERSON merely dallied with his dinner that evening, which caused me some concern. A healthy young chap with a poor appetite is usually deserving of a watchful eye. I resolved to keep him under observance until he showed a better mood.

My character as a Mr. Norton from Birmingham, a broker who was staying with the Santelles while arranging cer-

tain investments for Uncle Cato, conferred a sort of half guest, half agent status upon me, and nobody thought it worth while either to snub me or take me up in their arms, so to speak. That left me valued freedom. I was certain that only Tommy, among the guests, knew my identity, and he only by chance.

After dinner the party separated, pairing off to suit themselves, some to play cards and others to stroll in the moonlight. I found myself cornered by Uncle Cato, who made slight but understandable signals to me.

"What's up?" I asked when he came to me in the library.

"Cletus is worried," the old man informed me, his own face none too happy. "The head gardener found tracks in a clump of lilac under my nephew's bedroom window this afternoon. Large tracks, and there is every indication that the person making them stood there for a considerable time. The fact that they are in the midst of the clump where nobody but one desiring to be hidden would stand causes considerable speculation. Will you have a look?"

I nodded. "Send the head gardener to me back of the house," I requested, and strolled leisurely outside. A wait of five minutes brought the gardener, and we repaired to the lilac bush.

"I was raking leaves from among the stalks, sir," he explained, "and saw the tracks. They seemed fresh, and I am sure they were not there yesterday. So I reported the circumstance, sir."

"Quite right, Benson," I said, thinking that this bird must have attended grammar school for a considerable spell before he specialized in agriculture. "Now go up the back stairs, find Mr. Cletus's valet and have him light the bedroom. Tell him to walk about in the room, stand before the dressing table, sit down under the reading lamp, and otherwise show himself. Do that at once."

The gardener was off, and I parted

the foliage and stepped into the middle of the lilac bush, where my flash disclosed the tracks mentioned. A man had evidently stood there for some time, as the tracks were deep, signifying that he had remained motionless long enough for his weight to cause quite a depression. He had come into the bush from the side away from the house, as lighter impressions showed. Outside, on the grass, the tracks did not show.

Presently the lights in Flash's room came on, and placing myself in the sulker's tracks I surveyed the windows. From where I stood the figure of the valet could be plainly seen as he moved about in the room. When he sat down in the chair under the reading lamp, as directed, I could see only the top of his head.

"Cletus will do well to draw his curtains at night," I thought. "If an enemy—the three-fingered party, for instance—wants to take a shot at him, this would be an admirable point of vantage. I'll mention it to him."

I whistled for the valet, drew him to the open window, and dismissed both him and the gardener. Then I returned to Uncle Cato.

"Somebody stood in the bush and spied on Cletus, I have no doubt," I told him. "Better have your servants circulate around the premises at intervals to-night, beginning now. He might come back—and he might not go away again so quietly. I'll do a bit of looking myself."

Cato hastened to the servants' quarters, and I routed out Jim Steel. He and I, separating, gave the grounds adjacent to the house a thorough combing, but discovered no one. Not even a servant.

"Funny," I remarked when Jim reported that he had not come in contact with any one except half a dozen guests. "Cato was supposed to scatter his gang in the grounds."

"Gang is a good word," Jim commented.

I let that pass. Pessimism is Steel's curse. Anybody can convince him that it's going to rain, but he has to see the sun before he'll believe it is going to shine.

"I'm going to send your friend the reformed crook out scouting," I told him. "You watch that young fool Patterson, if you can locate him."

Finding Cato, I instructed him to send for the butler and instruct him to spend the next half hour prowling in the grounds at the front of the house. Cato again hastened off. I waited five minutes, then sneaked up the back stairs, picked the lock on the butler's door, and let myself in. I wanted to see his shoes.

In a corner of a closet I came upon two pairs. One of house shoes, and the other heavy walking brogues. The brogues had recently been in intimate contact with black loam—such as could be found in the middle of the lilac bush and around its edges. Furthermore, the brogues were big enough to have made the impressions there.

"Maybe this reformed crook didn't get a good dose of it," I thought. "Have to be vaccinated again. He must have stood in the bush this evening, else he'd surely have cleaned these shoes. Allowing that the tracks were made last night, there would have been an entire day for cleaning them. Must have been to-night. In that case the gardener did not discover them today while raking leaves. I may be wrong, but darned if I believe it."

My meditations were interrupted just as I replaced the shoes and closed the closet. The room door opened, and the butler, followed by Cato, walked in. Both stopped, looking me over in surprise that wasn't faked.

"What the—" the butler began.

"I don't understand your tactics, Mr. Norton," Cato broke it.

I broke in on Cato. "Come inside and close the door," I ordered—and I mean just that. Ordered. They obeyed.

"And I don't understand your tactics, uncle," I told Cato. "Which is a damned sight more to the point than your failure to understand mine. Questions and answers, with you doing the answering, please."

"What's the idea, you being in my room?" the butler demanded angrily, advancing toward me.

"Back up, big boy," I shot at him. "Back up and subside, or I'll have to ruffle you up some. Your turn will come presently."

"You forget yourself, Spence!" Uncle Cato admonished sternly. "Mr. Norton," he went on, when Spence had sullenly retired to a chair—but holding it by the back, instead of sitting in it, "please explain your conduct, and the remark just addressed to me."

"Right!" I agreed heartily. "But you'll do some explaining first. I asked you to scatter the servants over the place. You didn't scatter. Why?"

The old man looked a bit disturbed, but answered. "I really did not think it necessary to do so until later," he offered.

"You went off hurriedly," I reminded. "Must have changed your mind hurriedly, too. Why didn't you give instructions to your servants to search the lawns later, then?" I demanded.

"I—I am sure I did," he stammered.

"And I'm sure you didn't!" I snapped.

"How do you know?" he demanded, bristling.

"Because I inquired," was my reply. That was a lie, but it worked.

"Well," Cato admitted, "I said nothing to them at the moment. I shall see to the matter directly, however."

"You needn't bother," I told him. "He won't come back, that prowler. Because," I turned suddenly toward the butler, "he knows better than to do any sneaking to-night. He's been caught—with the goods on him. Rather, on his shoes. What about it, big boy? Got anything to say?"

He drew himself up haughtily, butler-like, but before he could utter the cold words on his tongue, I wheeled back to Uncle Cato.

"And that reminds me," I barked accusingly, "that you have disobeyed instructions a second time to-night! Instead of sending Spence to search the grounds for half an hour, you brought him here! Why?"

Before the startled old man could frame an answer, Flash Santelle entered the room quietly and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XI

A Woman in Red

I WAS looking for Spence, heard voices and—What's the trouble?" he broke off to inquire, appearing to sense the tenseness of the situation he had walked in on.

"No trouble at all," I replied. "Unless mutiny in the garrison can be called that."

"I don't understand."

"Perhaps Uncle Cato will explain," I said. "Go right ahead, uncle," I told him. "The question and answer game is not over yet. Never mind Flash. He's just a listener—now. Why did you bring Spence here, when I instructed you to have him make a search of the front lawn?"

"I meant to have him do that later," was the weak explanation.

"As in the case of the servants," I commented sarcastically. "You're pretty deeply interested in protecting your nephew, aren't you? Your actions show remarkable concern."

"Explain this thing!" Flash demanded, hands folded behind his back, leaning against the door. "I've a right to know!"

I listened while Uncle Cato made his explanation, then nodded to Spence to tell his tale.

"Mr. Santelle told me to come to my room with him," the butler explained. "When we entered we found this," he

hesitated, caught my eye, then resumed, "this gentleman here. That is all I know about it, sir."

Flash looked me over calmly, then asked: "What's the idea, Norton?"

"The idea is to have my instructions obeyed after this!" I snapped heatedly. "I'm here to see after your safety," I went on to remind him, "and not to have my directions in the matter questioned or ignored. That's the idea!"

"Quite correct, Norton," he agreed. "You are in command. Still, I don't quite understand your coming up to Spence's room, after thinking you had disposed of him for half an hour by a—shall I call it a pretext?"

"A rose by any name whatever smells just as sweet, or as disagreeable, owing to how well you like roses," I remarked. "The point is that I wanted Spence to spend half an hour on the front lawn. He didn't do it, though I'm not blaming him for that. Uncle Cato probably didn't tell him to. Did you, uncle?"

"Well, no—"

"I thought so. Now, Santelle," I said as disagreeably as possible, "either I get action when I want it and as I want it, or you can hire another pair of sleuths to do your guarding and mingling. I'm one of the sort who does his work under orders from himself and nobody else. Take me that way, or not at all. It's your time to talk. What about it?"

"I'm keeping you," he said quietly. "And approve of your attitude. Uncle Cato, no doubt, thought it unnecessary to hurry in the execution of your instructions. About Spence, though—you haven't explained—"

"Oh," I broke in nonchalantly, moving toward the door, "that is not important. I merely wished to see if he kept his shoes as clean as a good butler should. That's all."

Flash gave me a searching look, his face expressing perplexity—but he stepped aside and allowed me to pass out. I closed the door and went down

to the lawn, no longer worried about those footprints in the loam.

Steel met me as I left the servants' door.

"That young Patterson is acting mighty queer," he announced. "I located him at the foot of the lawn, leaning against a tree, alone. Tried to open up a conversation with him—and he told me to get the hell away. I did, but not out of sight. When he started moving off, away from the house, I sneaked along too. Then the damned young fool suddenly started sprinting. I lost him. He runs like Man o' War, that baby!"

"He's in love, Jim," I told him.

"Then he ought to run," was the dry comment. "Away from her, and not toward her—which is what he done. To her, I mean."

"This gets interesting," I said. "Go on."

"After I lost him," Jim continued, "I started hunting Miss Bailey, figuring that would be the best chance to pick him up again. I was right. He joined the girl on a bench in the shadow of a tree a bit later. The funny thing about that is that he must have known exactly where she was, because she was barely recognizable to me in that shadow at twenty feet away.

"Seeing that he had joined his lady, I drew off and hid in a bush. Then, five minutes afterward, this young fool comes tearing and swearing away from there, nearly run me down in the bush, and went blindly away on high. Me trying to keep up, and losing. Where he is now is something I don't know, and haven't been able to find out."

"I'll have a look," I told him. "Keep an eye on the servants' door, and find out if any of them come out and search, as I sent instructions for them to do. Report when you see me again."

Jim departed, and I began a stroll through the trees. Tommy Patterson must be found and made to act like a

sane person—if a man in love can be made to act that way, or even give a fair imitation. He'd be tramping up and down, ruining flower beds, in some retired spot, no doubt. Love sometimes accelerates the foot as well as the heart.

I searched patiently, but Tommy proved elusive. Nearing the lower end of the river path, where it leaves the lawn and dips into the first hollow on its way to the boathouse, I came up short. Something moved sketchily in the moonlight, near the path or on it, and about fifty feet away. I stepped into the shadow of a clump of bushes.

The sketchy figure came on, reached a point opposite me, then stopped in a listening attitude. I stared hard, trying to make out the features of the woman, for it was a woman—and not one of the guests, at that. A woman in a red dress. Failing to get a good view of her face from where I was, I stepped forward suddenly.

She cried out, though not loudly, darted back—

And then a light exploded in front of my eyes, just like a photographer's flash-powder does, a terrific pain shot through my head, and I went down on my face, groping blindly until I buried my nails in the sod.

I heard a man's voice behind me—then ceased either to hear or feel. But before all my senses went dead, I knew that my face, as I pitched downward, brushed against something soft and silky—and I breathed in a strong odor of lilac.

CHAPTER XII

A Couple of Wrenches

YOU damned crook!"

It was Jim Steel's voice, but I didn't feel like saying howdy to him right then.

"I was ordered to search, sir—"

"Yeah! But you wasn't ordered to clout the guests on the head with a blackjack!" Jim blazed.

"I think I cannot be blamed, sir," the voice of Spence, sounding a bit muddled and distant, went on. "I saw him dart into the shadow of the bush, and crept up to investigate. Then he dashed toward the path, a lady cried out—and then I acted, sir. What else could I do?"

"Can't answer that!" Jim retorted tersely. "But if you've laid him out for good, my man, you won't even get a trial. I'll croak you—"

"'Sall right, old man," I broke in weakly, wriggling to my knees. "I must have fainted, or something. Sorry, Spence," I went on, addressing the butler, "that my head is so damned much like a billiard ball. You'll have to try again. Where did that woman go?"

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Norton—" Spence began apologetically.

"Where did she go?" I barked.

"I did not observe her departure, sir."

"Had eyes only for the top of my dome, I take it. What about you, Steel?"

"I got here right on the heels of this bird," Jim growled. "Was just a trifle too late to stop him committing an assault on you. As for the woman, I ain't seen any."

"Did you hear a scream?"

"No."

"You heard it, Spence," I remarked. "So did I. That means I haven't dreamed it while I slept on the grass. Off with you, Spence—and keep your trap closed. Come with me, Steel."

"For once in my life I admire that mop of sun-cured hair you sport on your dome," quoth Jim. "It's serviceable, even if it ain't exactly an ornamental adornment. Saved you a cracked skull to-night. What's the trouble between you and the crook-butler?"

"A pair of dirty shoes," I replied. "He's sorry he didn't clean 'em, and that's the way he apologized for his carelessness. Just a small matter, Jim. Don't let it worry you."

"He's woozy in the head yet," Jim muttered to himself. "Your shoes would be something of a large matter, Tug," he commented. "Was it your boats he neglected?"

"No. His own—and shut up, will you?"

Jim subsided, and I led the way along the path toward the boathouse. I felt fairly sure the woman in red had approached the house from that point, and I might discover her, or some trace of where she had gone, by searching in that direction.

Where had I smelled that lilac perfume before, and recently? The place was alive with the shrubs, but it was past blooming time, and the scent had not come from one of them. Yet it had been very distinct. As noticeable as—As it had been in my office the morning before!

"Got it!" I exclaimed, coming to a stop in the path.

"Let me have it," Jim requested. "I'm tired of being outside of things. Suppose you spill something?"

"After a bit," I replied. "I want to add things up first. Try to make two and two emerge into four. Shut up again, will you?"

"Anything to oblige," Jim replied. We went on.

"Trying to save his nibs his job?" Jim queried, after a bit. "Telling him to keep his trap shut sounds like you're afraid Flash might can him."

"It does sound like it, doesn't it?"

We came out on the little pier where the boats were at anchor.

"Reckon Flash knew his man was going to clout you?" Steel asked.

"Maybe. Maybe not," I answered.

"Oh, go to hell!" Jim blazed, disgusted.

When Steel is disgusted he keeps quiet, and that was what I wanted. A big lump had risen on top of my head, and the head itself felt like it was an extra large lump inhabited chiefly by little boys with hammers. I felt uncomfortable in my stomach, too, like I had gone

to sea right after eating heartily of pork. But I meant to know something about several things before humoring my desire to go off somewhere and lie down for a day or two.

That creeping, listening woman in red intrigued me greatly. She was on that path for a purpose, and as long as the purpose remained unknown to me, just so long would I feel mighty uncomfortable. Also, had Spence's attack on me been brought about by his suspicions at seeing me acting like a skulker? Had he recognized me before he struck? And what part had Cato and Flash had in it, if any?

I had a lot of questions, but the answers had been torn out of the back of the book. I'd have to solve them for myself.

No one was about on the pier, and all the boats were in their accustomed places. I had previously checked them over, and knew their number and what each looked like. If the woman had come to Willow Bend by boat, she had departed and taken the craft with her.

We started back up the path.

"Jim," I said, breaking a long silence, "I'm half persuaded that all is not as it seems to be here."

"Sometimes a lick on the head has that result," Steel remarked. "Glad to see you are again thinking in straight lines. As for me, I've known this dump was crooked ever since Uncle Cato bought it."

"I don't mean that exactly," I objected. "Cato and his nephew may have as many curves as a clock spring, but I'm not interested in them in that way just now. I'm thinking there is real need for a guard over Cletus. Something is threatening him. Maybe it's this butler. It may be the three-fingered party. It might even be a woman—the one I saw to-night, for instance. At any rate, Flash is uneasy about something. His actions show it."

"He may be in love," Jim suggested. "That would make him act queer. This Marthe is something most anybody

could fall for without much exertion, and without ever having had any previous experience in falling. Had you stopped to consider that Marthe may have succeeded in casting a spell over him, whether he was willing or not, and that she might thereby have heaved a monkey wrench into some machinery that was theretofore running smoothly?"

I stopped where I was. Steel had started something going, and going with a hum. Maybe the blow on the head had had a good effect.

"Jim," I told him with conviction, "you have hit something plumb meaty—and without the aid of a blackjack. I'm thinking you're right as far as you have gone, and that is only halfway."

"Halfway?" Steel queried. "What do you mean, halfway?"

"This," I answered. "There has been two monkey wrenches heaved into the machinery—and by two separate and independent persons! Two large, drop-forged, steel monkey wrenches, Jim—make no mistake about it!"

"You and me. We're the wrenches, eh?"

"Not by a damn sight!" I contradicted. "We're the monkeys, Jim! That is to say, we've been assigned the rôle of monkeys! Hung up by our tails, so to speak—"

"And now the tails are slipping—thanks to the blackjack," Jim broke in, but I didn't pay any attention to him. I was busy listening.

Somebody was in the shrubbery on our left, speaking in low but earnest tones. A man's voice. Beckoning to Jim, I slipped off in that direction.

CHAPTER XIII Shadows

IT didn't take me long to locate the speaker. The voice came from a summerhouse about fifty feet off the path. I crept up and listened.

The male voice ceased, and a woman began speaking.

" You have no right to follow me around! I told you once to-night that I would be engaged for the evening, but you are very dense! You haven't any right—"

" Oh, I haven't, eh? You were glad to give me certain rights, let me remind you—"

" And let me remind you that I took those rights away—"

" And transferred them to that dam—"

" Don't you dare!"

Just Tommy and Marthe giving each other the devil. And I had thought I'd struck something worthwhile!

Steel, who also had heard, was plucking at my arm. " He found her again," he whispered. " Let's get away from here, and leave 'em fight it out in true loverly fashion. They're going good, now. That's a case of real love."

I was about to follow Jim's suggestion, when Tommy's voice came again —harsh and hate-laden.

" Remember what I told you!" he snarled. " If he goes too far I'll explode some powder under his nose—and he don't have to go very much farther than he has right now! Where is he, anyhow?"

I wanted to get the answer to that. Twice since supper, to my knowledge, Flash had planted the girl somewhere and left her. Why?

" It isn't any of your business, Tommy Patterson!" Marthe informed him, and not sweetly. " But if you must know, he had to go to the house to answer a telephone call. Now go away and stay away!"

Tommy stumbled off into the shrubbery, swearing under his breath. I know, because Jim and I had to dodge aside or be caught spying.

" Follow him, Jim," I ordered. " Don't lose sight of him again to-night, if you can help it."

" That's a hell of a job!" Steel grumbled nastily. " Playing tag with a bird gone rumdum with love! Monkey is right! You said it!"

But he went off after Tommy—which is Jim Steel's way. He'd walk straight into hell on orders, and he'd cuss about the heat before he got there—but not after. He'd start in to put out the fire. There's not many like old Jim Steel.

I changed sides on the summerhouse. Wanted to observe Flash and the girl together—hear 'em, rather. Not a very nice thing to do, perhaps, but a sleuth can't always observe the niceties of life.

Flash had hired me to watch him, and I meant to earn the money. Perhaps this love affair, if it was one, between him and Marthe wasn't any of my business, and Flash hadn't counted on me watching him while he was at it. But he hadn't counted on there being a love affair at all, for that matter. That love affair was monkey wrench number one.

I waited, and while I did so I couldn't help thinking that Flash had been rather thoughtless to leave the girl alone so far from the house. Then I had another thought. Maybe Flash was well aware that no harm would be likely to befall her. That last thought stuck.

About that time Flash came back. He entered the summerhouse and I heard a low murmur of voices. Then both came out into the moonlight, and strolled off toward the lower end of the garden. I let them get a fair start, then followed.

There were two of us following them. I became aware of that almost at once. Somebody was moving-along slowly on the opposite side of a rose hedge, stooping low and barely discernible.

I quit watching Flash and the girl, and gave my undivided attention to the shadow. At a point twenty feet after I discovered the shadow I came to a gate in the hedge, and passed through. The skulker was then only ten feet or so ahead of me, with Flash and Marthe about twice as far beyond.

Whether the shadow discovered me, or whether somebody else caused a disturbance, I don't know. But the black patch in front of me stopped suddenly, wheeled and dashed for the shadow of the trees on our right. I sprang forward, reached out and caught the edge of a flowing robe, there was a ripping noise, the cloth gave way—and I was left standing with a square of red silk in my hand. It felt bulky, and I peered intently at it.

"A pocket!" I exclaimed softly. "I ripped it clear away! And that's not all!"

There was a handkerchief inside the pocket. A dainty one—and it reeked with lilac perfume!

CHAPTER XIV

Tommy Rages

FLASH SANTELLE called from a point a few feet off.

"Who is it?" he demanded.

"Norton," I answered. "Come here for a minute."

He joined me, leaving Marthe alone.

"There's a stranger scouting about the grounds," I told him. "I've been following her—"

"Her?" he broke in. "You mean to say—"

"I mean to say it, if you'll keep quiet and let me," I interrupted. "Here's the lay: A woman is interested in somebody here, and that somebody appears to be you. She was trailing you and your companion, and I trailed her. She ran, but I got a grip on her gown, cloak, or whatnot, and—here, smell this."

I thrust the handkerchief under his nose. He took one deep whiff, then seized the bit of cloth in a hand, gripping it tightly, snapping his jaws rigidly together. Only for a moment did he exhibit signs of surprise and—shall I say consternation?

"One of the guests, probably," he ventured, returning the handkerchief, his voice easy and natural. "No wom-

an would be prowling about here at night—no outsider, I mean. Thanks, Norton, for keeping such good watch. And now that you are here, may I ask you to keep Miss Bailey company while I go to the house for a few minutes?"

I joined Marthe, made apologies for Flash, and managed to amuse her until he came back. Then I departed.

Flash had gone to order the servants out into the grounds to search. I found that out very shortly by bumping into them here and there.

Strange, I thought, that he should show so little concern over the prospect of a man hiding in the brush—the three-fingered party, probably—with evil intent, but the moment he smelled that lilac perfume he was all up in the air. Didn't waste a minute routing out the guard.

I was already interested in that sealed letter deposited with me the day before, but my interest grew by leaps and bounds then. Of course, the lilac-lady of the river path and the one who came to my office might not be the same, but I couldn't help associating them. Maybe it was the effect of the perfume. At any rate, I began to wish for the hour of ten to roll round. Maybe the letter would clear up some of the mystery—all of it.

Near the house I bumped squarely into Tommy Patterson.

"You're a devil of a fellow!" I exclaimed. "When I want you I can't find you, and when I'm not even thinking about you I find you under my feet. What's the idea for all this racing about the grounds? Practicing for a long-distance sprint?"

"Listen!" he hissed, drawing me into the shadow of a tree. "By God, Norton, something has got to be done! You'll call me a cad for what I did tonight, but I had to do it—couldn't keep from it! I listened to a conversation—"

"Between Flash and Marthe," I interrupted. "I know the preliminaries, so you can skip 'em. Give me the gist of the conversation."

"He proposed to her, damn him!"
That was news!

"Think of it, Norton—that damned crook asked Marthe to be his wife! And she—I can't hardly believe it, even now!—said yes! I heard her!"

Well, that proved me right about the monkey-wrench number one.

"Go on," I urged. "The parson hasn't spliced 'em yet, has he?"

"You're not trying to be funny?"

"Not at all. I'm just reminding you that until the fatal words have been uttered by somebody in authority, there's a chance they never will be. Aren't you behaving rather like an overgrown kid?"

"Hell!" he snapped, gripping my arm until his fingers must have bruised the flesh. "Do you think I'd raise a rumpus under ordinary circumstances? I wouldn't. If Marthe, or any other girl, threw me over I'd swallow the dose, no matter how bitter it might be. But this is not an ordinary situation. That fellow is a crook, Norton, and I'd swear it. He has fallen in love with Bailey's money, managed to fascinate Marthe, and unless somebody prevents it she'll marry him. That's why I'm raising hell, and why I mean to keep on raising it!"

"All right," I told him. "Go off by yourself and raise the devil and all his imps if that will relieve you. But, take my advice and don't let anybody hear you. I have told you to leave things to me. Do that and I'll promise to do all I can to show Marthe and her dad one or two reasons why there should be no wedding bells ring out for a Bailey-Santelle picnic. Go off alone—"

"Alone, hell!" he exclaimed. "Santelle won't let me! He's had a guy tagging me around all evening! On my heels since right after dinner, and I've had to keep on the dodge! But I've decided to let him catch me now—and when this crook boss of his sees him again he won't know him! That's all!"

He was off. Poor Jim! I certainly

hoped he wouldn't tag that madman too close.

So Marthe had already said yes to Flash! Fast work—and because of it I would have to show speed myself from then on. Things were not going in the direction I had expected them to travel when I first came to Willow Bend. No. They were going off at a tangent, and one wholly unprovided for.

But, then, there was that monkey-wrench number two. Somehow or other I couldn't get away from the notion that monkey-wrench number two would wreck the machinery altogether.

I went prowling for Steel. Within an hour I'd be on my way down the Kaw to Kansas City, and I wanted to make sure that Jim would be aware of my departure.

CHAPTER XV

Uncle Apologizes

SOMEWHERE in the grounds Jim Steel would be playing tag with Tommy, and I set off to round him up, following in the direction the young man had gone. Jim, I judged, had temporarily lost his playmate, which accounted for him being nowhere around when Tommy and I last met.

"Jim is cagy," I said to myself, "and he'll have a try for Flash and Marthe, knowing full well that the lad will be snooping around. So I'll have an eye out for that pair myself."

But I couldn't locate either them or Jim. It was getting late, and already some of the guests had gone indoors. The early evenings in that locality are usually pleasant and conducive to nocturnal rambling, but the summer night had begun to grow rather cool. I went to the house, got a light overcoat and returned to the grounds. If I couldn't find Jim soon I'd have to go on without him.

Fifteen minutes later I found myself on the path to the river and decided to leave Willow Bend for the night, de-

ferring my talk with Jim until I returned next morning.

That sealed letter was calling me. But for the fact that there might be no connection whatever — probably wasn't—between the woman who gave it to me and the one who had haunted Willow Bend that night, I'd have it open long before the assigned hour. But what if the woman should call for it, and find that I had betrayed her trust? That would be bad—and the Kaw Valley doesn't do business that way.

I'd have to wait until ten o'clock in the morning. Then, granting she had not called for it in person nor communicated with me about it, I'd not waste a minute reading it. On the other hand, should she present herself at my office before ten, then I'd busy myself in another direction. I'd follow her and dig her out. And that was that.

I started down the path, and came up against Uncle Cato.

"Mr. Norton," he said, recognizing me, "I want to offer my apologies for to-night. The fact is I am unused to such goings on as my nephew hints at hereabouts—this three-fingered man, you know. I simply can't take him seriously. That accounts for my failure to attach a great deal of importance to your orders."

But he had appeared somewhat concerned over those footprints in the lilac bush, if I recalled it correctly. I let that pass.

"No harm has been done, Mr. Santelle," I told him good-naturedly. "You may be right, at that. There may not be any three-fingered bird mixed up in this. Cletus may be just imagining things—poor chap. Go to bed and don't let thoughts of this ogre with the mutilated hand disturb your rest, and I'll guarantee he won't in the flesh. Good night."

He went along the path until the night swallowed him, and I stood where I was and pondered. What was

Uncle Cato doing in the grounds alone, and the hour nearing twelve? Searching? If so, for whom or what? He had made it a point to inform me that he didn't take the three-fingered man seriously, and he would hardly be searching for him in whom he did not believe.

Maybe just strolling. All by himself. Yes—maybe. But it didn't wash with me. He had not impressed me as one who would be out doing a *Romeo* with a maid, or one of the women guests. A trifle old for such foolishness. Anyhow, I'd have to pass him up until later.

Again I resumed my way toward the river—and again came to a halt before I had gone far. A groan, long-drawn and anguished, seemed to rise out of the depths of a snowball bush just off the path, and I made for the bush.

Jim Steel was in the act of getting shakily to his knees, one hand caressing his jaw, the other groping for something substantial to hold to.

"It was that damned lover!" he grunted, recognizing me. "Laid for me, and clouted me on the jaw! I went down like a poled ox—"

"Too bad he didn't use a blackjack, Jim," I consoled him. "With two of us able to use our thinking apparatuses, we'd have this case sewed up in rag-time!"

"Rub it in!" Jim grumbled.

"I think things will quiet down now," I said seriously. "It's getting late. Get right on Flash's tail and stick there. Watch out for a woman—a strange woman in red. I think she won't show up again to-night, but you never can tell. So long."

"What about this Tommy fellow?"

"Oh, he's not going to cause much trouble," I assured him. "Just a jealous kid. He and Flash will have to settle their business between themselves. And I'm betting Flash loses."

"I don't give a damn either way!" Steel declared heatedly. "Say, what do you make of this business anyhow?"

"Jim," I replied, "there's an old wise-crack which runs something like this: When Fate wants a man, it sends a woman after him—and the woman gets him. Ever hear it before?"

"Of course. Have you gone nutty? What's that got to do with this thing?"

"Well," I advised, "just keep it in mind. It applies to Flash Santelle, or I'm badly mistaken. So long."

I took one of Santelle's fast motor boats, and lit out for the city.

CHAPTER XVI

A Firecracker

I CONFESS that I did little but watch the clock on the following morning, waiting for ten to roll round, or for the woman to appear, as the case might be. That letter and that woman had become mighty important in my mind.

While waiting, I did a little summing up. Cletus Santelle was a crook—and a mighty smooth article. I was convinced of that. Cato Santelle, I felt forced to believe, was not the honest, innocent old man he pretended to be. Spence, the butler, was anything but a reformed doer of evil. All Santelle's servants, males at least, were of a piece with Flash, Cato and Spence.

Having reasoned things out thus far, the rest of the going was easier. But the scheme was so astounding it almost forbade belief—granting I had the right of it.

And the most disturbing thing about it was this:

Even if Santelle and his uncle were working a gigantic fraud on the public, there was not a single thing I could do about it. As usual, Flash was in the clear with the law.

Unless the lilac woman, or the letter, put me on to something that could be hung on Flash, or unless Flash did something more than he had done so far, and got caught in the doing, then he was where the law couldn't touch him.

I was scowling over that thought, at about nine o'clock, when my phone rang.

"Mr. Norton?"

It was the voice of the woman.

"Norton speaking," I replied.

"This is Ayra Banning. Please keep the letter until ten o'clock to-morrow morning. If you do not hear from me by that time, then open it and take whatever course you wish. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly, Miss Banning," I assured her. "I have some other articles in the office, your property I believe," I added, and waited.

Silence. Then: "What are they?"

"A pocket torn from a red silk dress, and a lilac scented handkerchief," I explained. "Will you let me know when and where I can return them?"

Silence, followed by a gasp. Then the phone clicked up.

That settled it. The woman of the letter and the woman of the handkerchief were one and the same.

Without the least twinge of conscience, I arose, opened the safe, withdrew the letter and proceeded to read it. A breach of trust? Think so, if you will.

Here's what I read:

To WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Cletus Santelle is about to engineer his most stupendous fraud, and I am betraying him because he has wilyely betrayed me. Cato Santelle, is in reality George Pierce, an Australian confidence man. All of the servants at Willow Bend are foreign crooks, recruited by Cletus Santelle during a recent trip abroad. This information can be verified, of course. Ask Australia about George Pierce. Check up on Cletus Santelle's quiet sojourn abroad last year. It should be easy.

As for myself, I shall not be here when this letter is read—if it ever is. I am Cletus Santelle's wife in all except name. No other woman shall ever bear that name. He has put me off with promises to make me his wife just as soon as he is sufficiently established in the confidence of the people

he now intends to plunder, and I have been patient. But I read the papers, and it has come to my knowledge that he is going after bigger game. The Bailey millions. He shall not have them.

AYRA BANNING.

"Well, what of it?" I asked myself, after finishing the letter. "It confirms what I already believed, and that's about all. But confirmation is worth a lot—come to think of it."

I reached for the phone, having it in mind to call Chief Enger and arrange for a little conference. But I sat back without touching the instrument.

What, after all, could that letter accomplish? Was it not merely a firecracker, instead of the bombshell which I had hoped it would be? What would it mean to the police? Flash Santelle? Exposure of Santelle. That was all.

"No law against Cletus and Cato masquerading as nephew and uncle," I told myself. "No law against them buying Willow Bend, and hiring servants from whatever source they chose. In short, Flash Santelle has not, so far as is known, broken the law in this instance, any more than it can be proved he has broken it in other of his enterprises. And that's that."

Why expose Santelle? Society wanted more than that. It wanted Flash Santelle put away where he would cease to be a menace. That letter, and the inevitable exposure it would accomplish, would merely interrupt Flash for the present, leaving him free to try something else.

And he had had the nerve to use me to further his scheme!

Right then and there I began to get hot under the collar.

CHAPTER XVII

Flash's Big Stunt

I COOLED off quickly, however, and began to do some thinking. Surely there was some way in which I could trap Flash Santelle—and trap him right.

What was this big scheme of his, anyhow? Little by little I pieced it out—to my satisfaction at least.

It was a good scheme, to my way of thinking. The police of the nation had long been making it too hot for Santelle's comfort. Something had to be done.

His best chance would be to establish himself somewhere under a cloak of respectability. The police had not a thing on him, and by a bold stroke it might be possible to convince them that he was going straight.

Flash took a trip abroad, according to Ayra Banning's letter. There he hooked up with George Pierce, the confidence man. Very carefully they recruited a small but efficient gang of expert thieves, then all drifted into America quietly and at different times.

That much I could piece together without any trouble, having the letter to guide me. Finally the old think-tank evolved the following:

Flash selected Kansas City as a field for future operations. There the fake uncle stunt was pulled—and a most convincing and successful stunt it proved to be. By means of forged letters, and a big bank account, the latter the proceeds of Flash's prowess, the thing had been feasible. The very boldness of it assured its success. It was something entirely new.

So far, so good. What next? Guess work, and I kept on guessing—though confessedly not so sure of my ground.

For instance:

Flash would succeed in thoroughly establishing himself before the general public in the character of a badly abused and wholly innocent young man. Before the police as a reformed crook—he hoped. Then would occur a series of really big jobs in different parts of the country, all of them planned and directed by Flash, but in which he would never participate in person. His tight little gang would do the actual work. Flash would remain

quietly at Willow Bend—and see to it that he always had a perfect alibi.

Willow Bend would make an admirable retreat, accessible by motor car and by the river. Its size would enable him to keep some of his gang near him in the guise of servants. Uncle Cato's seeming respectability, and his known wealth, would make an admirable cloak for Flash.

I got that far, then asked myself if it sounded reasonable. My final opinion was that it did. So I went on with more sureness.

Flash met up with something unforeseen. Bailey fell hard for him and for Uncle Cato—and Bailey had millions. Also one daughter, the sole heir. Daughter also falls, or seems to fall, for Flash. And he quickly perceives the big possibility. Why not marry the girl and get old Bailey's millions? What a stake! And it could be done while operating his other scheme, as well.

Flash made up his mind to do just that—and therein he made a fatal error. At least, it seemed so to me, now that I knew about this scorned woman business. The woman whom he had left behind somewhere, promising to bring her on later and marry her, had stepped into the picture. And when the woman steps in, things happen—not at all according to schedule. Flash should have known better.

Then a bit of light came in regard to his hiring a pair of sleuths to watch him during the week of the house party. It would seem that the guests alone would be sufficient alibi for Flash, but, as he figured it, not so. The testimony of two reputable private detectives, one watching him at night and the other having an eye on him during the day, would make the alibi rock-ribbed, and no mistake.

"That three-fingered bird was all in Flash's imagination," I grinned at this point. "But it was a reasonable excuse for having himself guarded closely."

Then I sat up and took notice. Flash wanted a mighty good alibi during that week, hence it followed he meant to pull something during that time. No mistake about it.

Could I make anything of that? I thought I could. The big job, whatever it might be, had evidently not yet occurred, since no report of anything worthy of the talents of Flash Santelle had been heard. It followed, then, that the job would be done before the week was out and the house party broken up.

And there, if ever, would be my chance to hook Flash good and proper.

What about the woman, Ayra Banning? She had failed to get in touch with Flash the night before, or to get a good chance to bump him off, as the intention might have been. She had requested me to hold the letter one more night, and that argued that she would make a try for Flash again the coming evening. But would she, after I had tipped her off that I had identified her as the woman whom I saw in the grounds at Willow Bend? I hoped not, but believed she would.

What was that crack I had made to Jim Steel? Oh, yes. I recalled it:

When Fate wants a man, it sends a woman after him—and the woman gets him. Was Fate sending the woman?

Only Fate knew the answer to that—and Fate wasn't doing any talking.

But of one thing I was certain, if Flash Santelle pulled anything that week, Fate and the woman would have to hurry if they beat me to him.

I pressed a button on my desk and summoned every available man the Kaw Valley had on its roster.

CHAPTER XVIII

Ominous Quiet

FLASH SANTELLE had hired two men to watch him, but I figured two would be far too few for the job. It would require at least half a dozen. Two to watch him, and the

others to watch the rest of the Santelle household. I laid my plans accordingly.

When I reached Willow Bend in the afternoon, I was met at the dock by a grinning Jim Steel.

"This Marthe girl is all in tears," he remarked. "Wants her Tommy, I take it—and Tommy simply ain't."

"Huh? I don't get that."

"Tommy took himself off, bag and baggage, this morning," Jim went on. "When the bunch got together for lunch, he didn't show. At tea he still kept out of the picture. Then she began to get anxious.

"At about that time I delivered a note which Tommy had intrusted to me, with instructions to hold it until the girl began asking about him. When she read the note, her face went sort of white, tears sprung into her eyes, and she registered deep concern. Been registering it ever since."

"Well, I'm damned!" I exclaimed feelingly. "Last night she was all off of Tommy, and now she's wanting him! Can you beat that, Jim?"

"No accounting for what a woman will do," Jim remarked sagely. "As for her, I'm frank to say that she has only been fooling herself about Flash. Tommy took the only course open to him, as she saw it. He absented himself, leaving a note bidding her good-by forever. Smart kid. Figures that will bring her to her senses. And it will."

"How do you know what was in that note?" I demanded.

Jim merely grinned.

"I forgot that you had it in your keeping all day," I remarked. "Hope you opened it expertly."

"I did."

That settled that. I somehow felt that Flash Santelle would not be in the best of moods that evening. He wasn't. Very glum, though he tried to appear very gay. He wasn't doing any moonlighting with Marthe that night, I noticed.

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Miss Bailey had copped herself another young man among the guests, and was making him entertain her. She kept pretty well to the front lawn, watchful, hoping, no doubt, that Tommy would show up.

I sneaked around quietly among the shrubs and trees, watching. At about ten o'clock I took notice that Spence and the rest of the male servants, with the exception of the footmen who were busied with the guests, were also doing some scouting on the premises.

Were they looking for the lilac woman to appear?

I was. Also watching for something else to happen. So long as the servants remained on the premises, well and good. If any of them tried to sneak away—well, there were four of my men watching, ready to trail them wherever they might go.

If Flash meant to pull a big job that night, the Kaw Valley meant to be in on it.

But it might be on the cards that Flash was too much occupied with his two female complications to do much else but keep an eye on them. He had blundered in two places. The names of the two blunders were Ayra and Marthe, and in the order mentioned.

So Flash Santelle, having mixed up with women, had ceased to be a smart crook. Had become merely a crook. Sometimes it happens that way.

By losing sight of his original purpose in locating at Willow Bend, and going after a girl worth millions, Flash had with his own hand thrown a monkey wrench into his own machinery. And the first woman, Ayra Banning, whom he probably had regarded as of little moment—just a weepy woman who could be stalled off with promises—was about to heave a second monkey wrench into the same machinery. Flash now realized all that. No wonder he was not in a good humor.

The evening passed very quietly. I kept on the prowl in the grounds, and

Jim Steel trailed Flash as much as possible. Eleven o'clock found most of the guests indoors, but the servants still guarded the lawn.

Uncle Cato played host in the drawing-room—instead of searching for the lilac woman as he had the night before. Flash was nowhere to be seen.

Neither was Jim Steel in evidence, so I rested easy about Flash.

Nearing the summerhouse at the foot of the lawn, I was about to turn back when Jim Steel suddenly broke from the shadows, running toward the house. I called, and he stopped.

CHAPTER XIX

The Chase

THE woman, Tug!" he exclaimed. "They got her!" "Who?"

"Spence, the two chauffeurs, and Flash! I was tagging Flash, lost him. Then I broke into a patch of moonlight, and saw them. Flash had hold of her, choking her. Then he swung her up in his arms and beat it toward the river. I ran back to get you. Too many for me alone!"

Just then the sputter of a motor caught my ear from the river.

"Round up the boys," I ordered. "Detail two to arrest Cato and the footmen. Follow to the river with the others. Quick!"

I was off to the wharf. Reaching there, I caught sight of a motor boat heading up the Kaw. One other motor boat remained, but I leaped into a skiff, the motor being too noisy. Besides, Jim and the boys would need it.

A quarter of a mile up the river could be seen the bulk of a small, wooded island which cut the stream in two parts. The motor boat seemed headed for it. I shot my craft into the stream and sent it after the motor.

When I had covered about half the distance the motor boat merged into the shadows of the trees of the island, and I hastened. A few minutes later

I landed just below it, and leaped ashore.

I listened, but all was still. Then I started inland, to come up standing in the brush at the edge of a moonlight flooded open space.

There were five of them, four men and the woman. I heard the voice of Flash Santelle—cold, hard, merciless.

"You would have it," he was saying, deadly calm. "And you have only yourself to blame for it. Quite likely you have wrecked everything here—and you can't wreck Flash Santelle's schemes and get away with it!"

"But, Cletus!" came the woman's voice chokingly. "You promised!"

"And here is how I fulfill the promise!" Santelle snarled. "For, remember, I also promised death if you betrayed me!"

Then, before I could possibly interfere, Flash Santelle's right hand shot forward, steel glimmered in the moonlight—and the red-draped form of the woman reeled for a moment, a moan came from her lips, and she crumpled to the ground.

I went into action with both guns. My first shot caught Santelle, and he whirled around, gun out and spitting lead. I felt a stab of pain in my right side, but went forward, weapons smoking.

Spence came into action, followed by the other two, and I dropped behind a shrub. Another second, and Spence went down. Back of me I heard the *put-put* of a motor boat, and I knew that Jim Steel and his men were coming.

Could I last until then?

Santelle, evidently not hurt badly by my first shot, was crouching behind a stump, searching for me with lead. The two chauffeurs were also under cover and blazing away.

Leaping up, I ran zigzagging for the trees, reached them in a storm of lead, and plunged toward the river. Steel and his men were perhaps half a quarter away. Back of me Santelle and his

men were coming. I reached down and cast off the motor boat, then ran and kicked the skiff away from shore.

"At least they can't get away!" I thought. "And Steel will get 'em, no matter what happens to me!"

Then Flash broke from cover, twenty feet away. His face was that of a madman. I was looking upon the real Flash Santelle.

"By God, Norton!" he shouted. "You've wrecked things, but you'll never live to brag about it!"

I whipped up my guns, snapped them—and there was no report. I had emptied them, and had no time to reload.

Santelle laughed, his gun arm stiffened. Then, behind him, appeared a red figure, a pair of arms went round him, tugging at him, ruining his aim. The next instant my clubbed gun dropped him on the ground.

Up the tree line the chauffeurs appeared, running toward us. I snatched up Santelle's gun—and then hell broke loose behind me. Jim Steel and his men were in action!

I stooped over the woman on the ground, hoping to aid her who had so vitally aided me.

The two chauffeurs went down before the blasting bullets of Steel and his men.

Raising the woman's head, I sought to find some sign of life. Her eyes opened, and her lips moved.

"He—shall—not—have—her—"

Then Ayra Banning died.

I turned and snapped the cuffs on Flash Santelle, just as he was struggling up from the ground.

"It's the gallows for you, Flash," I remarked. "But I take no credit. Fate sent a woman—and the woman got you."

THE END



Mystery Convict Caged for Protection

THE identity of the mysterious man in the iron cage at San Quentin prison has been disclosed as Bernard Schwarze.

Schwarze, eighteen months ago, cut a blanket rope by which a fellow prisoner was attempting to escape over the prison wall. The other man was sent plunging to the ground, where he was caught by prison guards.

Schwarze was locked up in a steel meshed cage so that fellow convicts could not wreak vengeance on him for his treachery. He had thought to gain favor with prison authorities for his deed. It is said he is tubercular. He is forty-four and is serving a long term for bribery.

The man whose escape he thwarted is Ernest Booth, well known for his articles and stories on crime and criminals. Booth, also suffering from tuberculosis, is now in Folsom prison.



"Police," growled one. "Come along quietly and don't make no fuss"

The Burned Match

A Stranger on a Bus and a Battle in a Basement—and the Homecoming Millionaire Was Caught in a Net of Mystery

By H. B. Harrop

AMIDDLE-AGED man walked cautiously along the top of the careening Fifth Avenue bus, past several empty benches, and sat down in the seat next to Orrin Quire.

"Hello, son," the middle-aged man said.

Orrin looked up, a little startled at being addressed by a stranger. The man, preoccupied, was staring straight ahead.

"Hello," Orrin replied. The man paid no attention.

"Queer," Orrin thought to himself. "Son," he had found out, was a casual term here in America which any middle-aged man might apply to any other

man younger, but why the stranger should accost him at all—Orrin puzzled awhile and finally put it down to the friendliness of these Americans.

Orrin forgot the man in his interest in the rushing traffic below and the mountainous buildings all around him.

This was his native country, but he felt like a foreigner. He had been taken to England when a baby—went to school over there, traveled awhile on the Continent, and now had returned to America, curious to see this land he belonged to.

He was excited—and there was a good reason for it. He was free at last.

He had landed in America only a few hours ago—with Aunt Cassie—always he had been with Aunt Cassie, ever since she had taken him to England under her wing when he was three years old. Now it was good to get away.

Poor old Aunt Cassie got appendicitis coming over on the boat and they had to carry her off at the pier and rush her to a hospital. Orrin had walked down the gangplank beside her stretcher.

"Orrie," she had said to him. "You're of age now—got your grandfather's fortune—no one to depend on anymore if anything happens to me—you're just an innocent boy, Orrie, but now you've got to be a man. But—but, remember, you'll always be Aunt Cassie's boy."

Orrin, on top of the bus, smiled to himself. Good old Aunt Cassie. Of course she'll pull through. Aunt Cassie pulled through everything. He would have gone to the hospital with her, but it would have done no good, and Aunt Mary had gone anyhow.

Orrin, immediately after seeing his aunts off to the operation, had taxied to his hotel, left his bags, and boarded a Fifth Avenue bus. He was keen to see New York, and thought, in the few hours before supper time, a bus ride would be a good way to see a considerable part of it quickly.

Aunt Cassie's boy felt like an explorer. New York was a queer place, he decided. Merely getting around was an adventure. He was primed for excitement.

Coming over, Mrs. Frederick Topps-Jones had tried to tell him what it was like, but even that woman's description had failed to give him any idea of the turmoil that he was now actually in.

"I am going to be late," the man next to him said suddenly.

Orrin turned again. The stranger still had the preoccupied expression which certainly invited no conversation. A little resentfully Orrin decided not to make any comment.

He watched the man out of the corner of his eye. He saw him reach suddenly for an inside pocket, draw out a cigar and without clipping the end, stick it between his lips. He tried to light it. Apparently it wouldn't draw, and with a gesture of disgust he hurled the cigar over the bus rail.

Orrin was amused. He wondered what kind of business this queer fellow was in. He noted that he was quietly dressed, wore a single gold ring on the left hand, and had the air of a professional man and the appearance of being a person of some consequence.

The bus slowed for the stop at the corner of the park. The middle-aged man said: "Here!" pressed something into Orrin's hand, and left hurriedly. Orrin's fingers closed instinctively.

When he opened his hand he discovered he held a burned match!

The bus moved on and Orrin laughed. "Odd," he murmured, and stuck the match end in his vest pocket.

They were far uptown when Orrin decided he had done enough sight-seeing.

He dropped down the spiral stairs and said to the conductor:

"I'll just step off here, if you don't mind."

"Help yourself, brother," assented the conductor, reaching for the bell.

"I wonder if you could direct me back to the Hotel Belmont?"

"Sure!" The man grinned; his passenger was a foreigner—by token of manner and speech and obvious ignorance, but the conductor liked his face just the same. "'Cross town either way, just a few blocks, and you'll find a subway station."

The street was lined with trees, which threw dark shadows, but it was a good neighborhood and the houses were the solid, comfortable homes of well-to-do people.

Under a lamp at some distance a massive policeman stood idly. Beyond was a large public building, a school perhaps.

Orrin suddenly paused. His hand strayed to his pocket and he fingered the burned match. His eye was attracted by a gloomy pile amidst the trees directly opposite. Memory seemed to tug at him; the place reminded him of something out of his past, he could not tell when or where.

As he shook his head in frustration and started off, a sharp whistle sounded behind him and at the same instant two figures, one very tall and lean, the other short and dumpy, almost grotesquely fat, came running toward him from the shadows.

Their manner was so aggressive Orrin, surprised, braced himself for an attack.

One circled him, the other charged from the front. He feinted and in a second hands seized him from behind, pinioning his arms. Something voluminous and musty-smelling was slipped over his head and lashed around his elbows.

Orrin ducked and lunged, but hands were all over him; he felt himself being hustled off the sidewalk and across the smooth asphalt of the street; he stumbled up the opposite curb, shoved, pulled, half lifted by the grasping hands, and on to a grassy bank.

He was rather more thrilled than frightened, more offended at the indignity than overborne by a sense of helplessness. He laughed while he struggled and choked in the folds of the musty-bagging.

A lusty yell for help would bring the big policeman—but this was adventure.

An utter stranger had made him a present of a burned match; now he was being kidnaped; to-morrow, it might very well be, the newspapers would announce that he was held for ransom. These Americans made it interesting for you.

He was led stumbling across unkempt, weedy grass, and through shrubbery. He heard his captors talking excitedly together in whispers. They seemed to have been joined by

more of the gang, and he heard one explain:

"We've got Van Dyl; we're taking him to the haunted house."

Another whispered excitedly: "The Kidder has made up a new Third Degree!"

Orrin had an inkling: he was the victim of mistaken identity.

His shoes scraped on a gravel drive and the scraping of many feet echoed in a cavernous place. There was a brief halt, with more excited whispering, and then three resounding raps on a door.

A voice, slightly tremulous with breathlessness, commanded: "Open, O Warden of the Outer Portal!"

Another voice, severely solemn, replied: "Who are ye who thus rudely demand entrance?"

"We are pilgrims just come from crossing the burning sands."

"By what right do ye demand entrance?"

"We be all of the true faith."

"Enter, then," consented the Warden of the Outer Portal, "and prove yourselves to the keeper of the drawbridge."

There was a forward surge followed by another halt when the voice of the keeper of the drawbridge, a thready voice, inclined to stutter, demanded: "What seek ye, O strangers?"

"Shelter from the stars, and a night's rest."

"Have ye brought food?"

"Three loaves."

"How are they to be divided?"

"One for the landlord, one for the poor, and one for ourselves."

"Enter, then, brethren, and welcome."

They moved forward again, this time on a smooth cement floor. Some one giggled. Some one else protested: "Aw, shut up, Chub!" There were snickers and another voice chimed in gleefully, "Oi! Oi!"

Orrin Quire was not unfamiliar with schoolboy secret societies; he had memorized more than one ritual in

England, and he had a vivid recollection of a particularly devilish initiation that had occurred to him the year he attended school in Zurich. He concluded that by virtue of a mistake in the dark street fate had selected him to personate an unwilling candidate.

Judging by the resonance, they were in a very large room, and again, judging by the persistent mixed odors of stale gasolines and lubricating oils, it must be a garage.

The whispering continued.

A crashing, soul-shaking roar, calculated to make any blindfolded man's heart skip a few beats, quelled the secretive murmurs; it was only an automobile horn, but behind the closed doors it sounded like a dynamite blast.

There was a profound silence, then a herald proclaimed: "Bow to the exalted High Priest of Osiris!"

Chuckles to himself, Orrin submitted when they faced him around and ordered him to give ear.

"Candidate," the high priest began, in a voice that roved from treble to base and back—the "changing" voice of a growing boy—"you have been initiated into the first two degrees of the Order of the Sacred Pyramid; you are now about to be introduced to the mysteries of the frightful Third Degree. Do you come of your own free will?"

They slipped the bagging off and by the vague light Orrin was able to see that he had been correct in taking the place for a garage. It was unusually large, with a mechanic's bench and some small power machinery along the wall and a car in one corner.

The high priest, a ghostlike figure in a white robe, was flanked by two torches which burned very dimly and threw Orrin's face into shadow. Orrin could just make out the rank and file of the order, also hooded, standing in a semicircle behind.

The candidate turned from a leisurely survey of his surroundings to face the high priest again.

"Well, rather," he drawled. "I walked."

"Well, rawther," mimicked some one.

"Pie Face, I'll get you for that!" threatened the high priest.

"Aw, I didn't mean nuthin', Kidder," apologized Pie Face.

"Shut up!" ordered the herald.

"Candidate," went on the high priest, "you will now be carried into the bowels of the Sacred Pyramid, there to sleep for a year and a day under the spell of the magic potion. Let the bearers of the holy fires lead on!"

Two hooded figures took up the torches, the high priest marched behind with stately tread, while herald, drawbridge keeper and other nameless dignitaries brought up the rear.

Orrin Quire, with a husky lad on either side securing his arms, was swept along by the brethren, who were still persuaded they were initiating somebody called Van Dyl.

They went down a narrow passage and into another cavernous room of which nothing was certainly visible in the faint blue light from the torches except that the floor was paved with white tile.

The wayward voice of the high priest rang out as though he were shouting into a cistern.

"Let the cup bearer administer the magic potion, and lower the mummy into the tomb!" he cried.

Orrin then realized that they were intent on forcing something pungent-smelling from a bottle between his teeth; and glutton for adventure though he was, declined to go further with the farce.

A jujutsu wriggle and his arms were free; the bottle crashed to the floor. The guards grabbed for him again, but they were no match for him. Some one jumped on his shoulders; somebody tackled knee high.

Jerked, bumped, clutched at and weighted down, Orrin dragged the

footballer and the other assailant hanging to his neck.

The lad with the changing voice roared once more: "Lower the mummy into the tomb!"

One of the torches went over in the swirl, to a stench of doctored alcohol, and abandoning the ritual the ring-leader shrieked at the top of his falsetto: "T'row him in de tank!"

The finish was sudden. The hands ceased to grasp, and Orrin was pushed, his feet finding no grip on the smooth tiles, until he felt himself going over a precipice. One last clutch at the edge and down he went, to land on his knees with a jarring thud.

A door above slammed and the roar of voices was extinguished.

He had certainly thought to give a better account of himself. He was a prisoner—he had no idea where—in utter darkness, and in silence relieved only by his own hard breathing. His collar was unbuttoned, his overcoat partly turned wrong side out over one shoulder, and he had lost his hat.

He felt for a match box, but only encountered the burned match in his waistcoat pocket.

Creeping carefully around in the blackness, he examined his prison. The floor was smooth and hard—cement or tile; the wall was vertical and smooth and extended above his reach; a complete circuit showed that the place measured about ten yards by twenty. The floor sloped slightly and at the lower end there was a small round opening barred with a grating.

He was bending over it when a scraping sound grew out of the silence. Something hard poked him from above, something which his groping fingers told him was a ladder lowered into the pit. Some one was stealthily descending.

The intruder uttered a muffled squeal in his grasp, and Orrin became aware of soft curves and a suggestion of perfume, giving the lie to the heavy rough-coat and knickers.

"Ouch!" she cried. "You're choking me, Orrie. Let go—it's Lorraine. Are you hurt? I'll get even with that Kidder Rashky, honestly I will. Don't make a sound; they ran out through the garage, but I think they are waiting to make sure you don't get away."

She had called him "Orrie," and she was bent on rescue. Orrin did not understand it, but he answered, in a guarded whisper: "Right-o!" and steadied the ladder for her to climb.

"I was with them all the time," she said, "but they didn't know me in the dark. Chub Smith's sister Ellie told me this afternoon that Kidder Rashky was going to catch you and put you through a special third degree.

"I waited for you to come back from down town to warn you, but when you got off the bus alone they were hiding under the trees.

"There wasn't a thing I could do but follow along. Oh, gosh! I was mad when they pushed you into the swimming pool. I tried to push the Kidder in, too, but I didn't have any luck."

So that was a swimming pool. Orrin was glad there had been no water in it.

They had scaled the ladder now and she was leading Orrin by the hand along the smooth tiled ledge that bordered the pool.

"Wait here," she commanded. "I'll slip out through the laundry and spy on them."

A door clicked twice in the dark and Orrin was alone—but only for an instant. The lock clicked again, there was a hoarse cry, and then the door slammed and she was beside him, panting.

"They're hiding in the laundry. I gave them a piece of my mind, anyway. I—I cursed them! I told them what I thought picking on a boy younger than they are!"

The knob of the door was being wrenched with futile violence while she was hurrying him toward the passage that led to the garage.

Feet suddenly sounded in the passage and a light flashed. She dragged him back, running; past the door of the laundry, around the end of the pool, and halted at bay in the farthest corner of the room. A beam of white light played across the empty swimming pool and found them.

Along the wall in that corner there was a row of steel lockers. Orrin's hand, groping behind him, felt the lower hinge of the first locker. It moved, and suddenly the door of the locker swung open on its opposite edge.

"Here!" Orrin gasped. "This seems to be a way out."

He stepped into and through the locker, drawing her after him, the steel door clanged shut, and they were in a small unfinished corridor very dimly lighted from without by leaded windows; a flight of skeleton steps led upward, while at the farther end of the corridor another narrow doorway, similar to the one by which they had entered, was disguised in identical manner by a backless locker.

Orrin squinted through the ventilating slots in the door of this second make-believe locker. The laundry, a spacious basement on the other side of the door, was fully visible in the light of an electric lantern standing on a bench. On one side of the laundry were windows and a door, all closed. Directly opposite another door opened on mysterious darkness. The room was deserted.

"Now we can dash out," said Orrin. "Across the laundry and through the garage—with luck." His hand sought and luckily found the trick latch and they edged through. Midway on the road to safety she stopped short, stared at him—and began to cry.

"There, there," soothed Orrin. "Buck up; one more sprint and I'll take you home." She was pretty as a picture, despite her boyish gear, and very young.

"B-but," she sobbed, "you are not Orrie. I thought you were my brother."

Her brother, eh. What was it they called the lad for whom he had been mistaken? Van-Van Dyl—that was it. And she had called herself Lorraine. Lorraine Van Dyl!

"But I'm Orrie," he insisted. "That's what they've called me since I was a little nipper—"

She broke away and darted out into the garage.

"I say!" he called, guardedly. No answer from the dark.

Instead, the door connecting with the swimming pool chamber burst open and a hard-looking youth in the uniform of a chauffeur and leggings raced through, whimpering, with two pursuers at his heels.

The foremost of the pursuing pair struggled with an automatic as he ran, trying to cock it. The second, who was disheveled and gasping for breath, cried: "Easy there with the loud speaker, Mike! Bean him!"

Orrin had dropped promptly behind a table at the alarm. The man called Mike swung his weapon in both hands and brought the butt down on the head of the fugitive, who pitched into a crumpled heap.

"That's one," puffed Mike, without other show of emotion, stooping to feel his prey. "Now find out where the skirt went."

They ran back into the swimming pool chamber, and Orrin crawled under the table to the victim. Bloody froth oozed from nostrils and mouth, a pool of blood widened on the floor, and a clean slot-like depression in his skull showed that he was beyond help. Orrin switched off the light and shivered as he retreated with speed and caution into the garage.

Several uniformed policemen with flash lamps and drawn revolvers were disappearing into the passage connecting the garage directly with the swimming pool chamber.

A huge moving truck, of the type used for moving furniture, had backed into the garage, and stood with lights

out, but engine purring. Orrin leaped into the driver's compartment of the truck and pulled the door shut.

A small dash lamp illuminated the controls, which he examined with quick understanding; everything looked familiar except the left-hand drive, and that only puzzled him for a second.

He pushed the clutch pedal, tugged at the gear-shift, let go the clutch and pressed the accelerator. The engine roared and the huge bulk moved forward, out through the porte-cochère, and down the sloping drive. A chorus of shouts and a rattle of firearms resounded from the rear as the reckless driver changed to high and switched on his headlights.

A bullet or two whined past within earshot, but he swung joyously out of the grounds into the deserted street, the clamor of the chase diminishing with distance—down the street, past the lamp-post where he had seen the policeman, past the high school; now near a brightly lighted house with a festive awning across the sidewalk.

A blanket, heaped up in the other end of the driver's seat, came to life and Orrin, startled, saw the little knickered Amazon who had salvaged him from the depths of the pit sit up.

"I want to get off here, please," she said, with dignity.

To the squeal of brakes, while the driver labored with foot and hand, the truck slackened speed and came to a halt.

"I'm so sorry," apologized Orrin. "Shall I back up—Lorraine?"

She faced him with defiant eyes, fumbling at the handle of the door on her side.

"Honestly," she said, "I hope I shall never see you again!" and then, as the door came open and she stepped down to the sidewalk, she added, "Thanks for the lift—Orrie!"

"It has been a great pleasure—Miss Van Dyl," answered Orrin, stiffly.

As quickly as she had left by the

right-hand door, he slid out at the other side, watched her running back until she had disappeared under the awning, and then he turned the corner of the silent cross street and sauntered away with the leisurely gait of an honest citizen.

"Gad!" he exclaimed to himself. "For a man returned to his native land only a few hours I've had adventure enough already."

Orrin found a hat shop and bought a hat to replace the one lost in the scuffle. There he committed a serious error—he asked the salesman about subways, and the best method of reaching his hotel. He underestimated the capacities of the police for painstaking detail.

His first act on arriving at his hotel was to telephone the hospital, to assure himself that his Aunt Cassie was out of danger and that neither she nor his Aunt Mary needed him. Immediately after that he left another footprint on the trail; he put in a call for Mrs. Frederick Topps-Jones.

When the operator had informed him, "Here's your party," Orrin asked, "Are you there?"

Mrs. Freddy's lilt replied: "You bet your sweet life I'm here! How are you making out, old dear, and how do you like your native land?"

"Oh, ripping!" admitted Orrin. "These Americans—I mean to say, my countrymen—they take an int'rest in you, don't you know; they make you little presents, and indicate you a good time, and keep you—int'rested, if you know what I mean. I'm learning the language, too. I can say, 'T'row him in de tank!"

"But, look here, I'm going to ask a tremendous favor of you, dear Mrs. Freddy—something frightfully nervous, or is it nervish? You mentioned yesterday that if we landed in time you counted on attending this evening the birthday party of a niece—Laura, wasn't it? or Laurel?"

"Lorraine Van Dyl, my favorite niece, yes. We are not included in the

dinner arrangements because our arrival was too uncertain, though we expect to drop in for the dancing later in the evening.

"You want to go? You shall; be here by ten, not later. We are in Park Avenue, only four blocks from your hotel."

Orrin unpacked, bathed and shaved with care, and rubbed hazeline on certain painful bruises. When he had arrayed himself formally he went down and dined, after which he donned coat and muffler, and with topper set just a little back on his curls and looking like a very young and very handsome Londoner of an unusually alert and intelligent type, he asked the doorman to direct him to the corner of Park Avenue and Thirty-Eighth Street, the address Mrs. Freddy had given.

He was going out when he noticed a beefy man in conference at the door of the manager's office, not more than twenty paces away. The man was exhibiting a soft hat of familiar appearance. It was his own hat! And just then the head porter glanced his way and pointed.

The revolving door turned invitingly. Orrin stepped out on to the sidewalk. A taxi stood at the curb. Orrin gave the chauffeur a bill, grinned, and told him to drive once around the block and keep the change.

The beefy man came out through the revolving door, ran after the taxi, shouting, while Orrin Quire, already guilty of several misdemeanors and at least one felony, and now a fugitive from justice, went on his care-free stroll toward the Topps-Jones residence.

Freddy Topps-Jones earned a fortune every year prescribing art for the decoration of interiors; the function of Mrs. Freddy, who was less than half his age, was to think up the most delightful ways of spending the annual fortune. They were on the best of terms, and very happy.

There were visitors when Orrin ap-

peared and somebody suggested bridge, so that the evening was well advanced when the car was summoned to go to the Van Dyls.

When they stopped before the awning, guests were still arriving in numbers and lines of waiting cars stood on both sides of the street. Orrin was interested to note that the truck in which he had fled from the haunted house was gone.

Mrs. Freddy presented him to her sister, Mrs. Van Dyl, a friendly little woman, who welcomed him as an expatriate likes to be received.

Judge Van Dyl was pressing his hand warmly, telling him how glad they all were to have him home again, "now that he had grown into such a fine, upstanding young man, who would doubtless"—but Orrin lost the rest of it in the sudden realization that here was the queer man who had handed him the burned match.

"This," said Mrs. Van Dyl, patting the shoulder of a frightened youth, much too large for his fourteen years, "is our son, Orton. Mr. Quire, as a very, very little boy, lived in the big place over the way, Orrie, before you were born.

"And this," drawing forward a ravishing vision in something filmy, "is our little girl, Lorraine."

Great blue eyes, wide with suspense, looked into Orrin's. What was that awful phrase Americans used when introduced for the first time? Oh, yes, to be sure.

"Pleased to meet you!" said Orrin, and the blue eyes twinkled and thanked him.

Orrin really wanted to dance, but he must pay court first to Grandma Van Dyl. She sat on a sofa like a dais and pointed an ear trumpet at him.

"Know you among a thousand," she shrilled. "Picture of your grandfather when he was your age." She gathered the skirt of her modish dress, with the absent-minded movement that an age of petticoats had made habitual,

scowled when she realized that there was nothing to gather, and pounced at him.

"Now I suppose you are going to open the old Quire place and carry on just as your grandfather did. After your mother died and Cassie took you to England, he lived all alone in the big house with his Japanese servants, his secret passages, his orchids and his zoo, entertaining impossible people, associating with prize fighters, backing musical shows, betting on horses and gambling in Wall Street, and getting richer all the time."

Then, ignoring Orrin she turned on Mrs. Freddy: "Where *are* his blessed aunts?"

"Cassie is in the hospital, with appendicitis. And Mary is with her."

"Of course. Mary never called her soul her own. Nobody could with Cassie. Most stubborn, willful creature I ever knew."

Mrs. Freddy spoke confidentially into the trumpet, while Orrin sidled away unnoticed.

Guided by the music he found the ballroom and cut in as soon as he could locate Lorraine Van Dyl.

"So we are twins," said Orrin. "Your birthday, my birthday."

"Twins!" echoed Lorraine. "I like that; and you practically a grown man. Honestly—why, I am only seventeen."

A youth cut in, whereupon Orrin retreated to the side lines awaiting another chance. The butler whispered to him: "If you are Mr. Orrin Quire, there are two gentlemen at the side door with a message for you. This way, sir, please."

As Orrin stepped out on to the porch the two gentlemen received him strategically, one on either side, securing his arms in a firm grasp and marching him down the steps.

"Police," growled one with terse economy of words; "come along quiet and don't make a fuss."

The drivers of the waiting cars stared after the hatless guest.

The other detective, the beefy man who had traced him to his hotel, spoke. "Now look-a-here, bo, you come clean and maybe we can do you good," he began amicably. "But you gotta come across, see?"

Orrin digested this and concluded that no reply was required of him, for they were already crossing the street.

"You gotta come across," repeated the big man, with more insistence.

"Quite so," agreed Orrin, and fell silent.

"You come clean," wheedled Orrin's friend; for the State, eh? Self-defense or something, wasn't it? You're a friend of the prosecutor. That'll help."

"My dear fellow," Orrin said patiently, "sometimes words make sense when there is no real thought conveyed or intended like in nonsense rimes. Just what do you mean?"

"He's a nut, Swarts," volunteered the other detective.

"One more chance," said Swarts, halting and speaking slowly as to a child. "Maybe you're a foreigner that don't understand English good. Here's what's what."

"After you give the driver the works you hop the load of bootleg and lam down the street a couple blocks, and then park and walk away. We find your hat in the garage and look for a bareheaded man walking across town for a subway, not forgetting to ask in hat stores. You was sap enough to tell the hat store clerk you wanted to get to the Belmont Hotel.

"I go to the Belmont and ask. That was easy because your name was in your hat all the time. When I flag you what do you do? Send me running after an empty taxi, and walk off again."

"Smooth, ain't you? But the telephone girl keeps a record. I try the hospital and draw a blank. Then I get to whatsisname Jones's and find you have left there and gone to the prosecutor's own house. What for? I ask

you. To give yourself up, or did you think that was the last place we would look for you?"

Through the mist of strange words Orrin was beginning to get a very clear understanding of the delicate position in which he found himself, but he kept silent and maintained his pose of bewilderment.

The other man said with impatience, "Aw, come on, Swarts. It's too cold to stand here talking. The captain's across the street looking over the job and he said to bring this guy to him as soon as you made the pinch."

"I was going to take him to the Ten Eyck Avenue station and book him," said Swarts, "but it's all one to me so long as I get the credit for it. It's my pinch, and the first time I've had a murder."

They walked Orrin up the drive, circling the gloomy house, to the farther side and under the porte-cochère beyond which was the garage, its wide doors open.

There was an atmosphere of repressed excitement about them, the glittering buttons of uniformed officers striking flashes of fire in the light of lanterns, several police cars, some of them with engines chugging, men in citizen's clothes who looked at Orrin professionally, and younger men—reporters Orrin thought—who asked personal questions.

A policeman said to Swarts: "The chief is inside razzing Honest Gus Ginsberg. You better go right in."

He made way for Orrin and the detective, but blocked the doorway, grinning, in the face of the reporters.

Inside, a white-haired, red-faced man in police captain's uniform sat at a flat-top desk, at his left sat a stenographer intent on his notebook. In another chair on the opposite side of the desk, lounging with an air of good humor, an overfed citizen smirked and gesticulated as he protested, "And I don't know another thing about it, cap. Don't you believe me?"

"Sure I believe you, Ginsberg. Ain't you called Honest Gus?" snarled the captain. He paused to glare at Orrin, motioning Swarts to herd his prisoner into a corner and wait.

"You was just looking in, Gus, to pass the time o' day with your old pal, Mike Laffy, and everything happened before you came in. You just walked into trouble by chance, Gus. But I'm going to hold you just the same! Go outside now."

"Oh, all right, Captain O'Down," agreed Honest Gus, amiably; "you know your own business best—and you've got your job to look out for."

In spite of Ginsberg's oily, smooth manner his last words suggested a veiled threat.

A fourth man, a clear-eyed, quiet, observant man, with the air of a scholar rather than of a policeman, half-seated on a low bookcase a little behind the captain, was pulling thoughtfully on a cold brier.

"Am I right, chief?" asked O'Down, substituting respect for his truculent manner.

The quiet man, who had been casting swift, appraising glances at Orrin, replied only with an indifferent lift of eyebrows and one shoulder and strolled out. The detective, Swarts, must have caught a private signal, for he followed, leaving Orrin alone in his corner.

Orrin had been looking about him with interest, speculating on the identity of the several actors and studying the setting. The room was half library and half office, sumptuously furnished, with a door—that by which they had entered—leading into the garage, and another, a double one, connecting perhaps with the main hall giving on the porte-cochère. Across this latter door stood a camp cot with a pillow and some tumbled blankets.

Captain O'Down glared at Orrin, biting at one corner of his ragged white mustache as though about to burst into a torrent of words. He growled at the stenographer. "Get me the caretaker."

The stenographer went to the door and called out into the garage, "Send in Mike Laffy."

In a moment the fellow stood impudently before the desk and the captain began with withering scorn: "Mike, you're not only a liar but a dumb-bell! You can't remember your story long enough to tell it twice alike. How long have you been caretaker here?"

"About six weeks—since the 1st of November," answered Mike readily.

"Whose house is this?"

"Squires', or Squares', or something; I don't know."

"Huh! You don't know! You're a bird of a caretaker."

"It belongs to a rich young fella that lives in Europe and spends his time with dukes and earls and shooting pheasants. I ain't a caretaker, anyhow; I'm a kinda watchman. I don't know nothing about the house."

"I was hired by the agents, Judson Brothers, and all I have to do is sleep here every night—something about insurance and not being occupied. They gimme the keys to the garage, and a part of the basement, and this room; that's my bed over there."

The captain's ill temper increased. He was not succeeding in shaking the man's nerve as he had expected, and he was evidently a poor loser.

"Sure it's your bed. And you was sound asleep and didn't hear a word of this jamboree."

"I wasn't asleep—I wasn't here at all. I got here a little late this evening, and when I was coming up the drive all of a sudden this here truck come tearing down and nearly run over me, and there was a lot of shooting and yelling and when I ran in to see what it was all about the bulls grabbed me. There ain't any other story because that's what happened."

"Ya-a-a!" Captain O'Down's scorn redoubled. "But we've got your pal and he don't tell the same story at all." The captain pointed dramatically at Orrin.

Mike spun around with blanched face, but after one look he leered cunningly and retorted, "Cap, I never saw this guy before."

The captain's red face darkened to purple.

"Get out of here!" he roared. "Get out! Take him away, and send in Swarts—on the jump! Now, you," whirling on Orrin with a great show of ferocity, "come here and sit down in that chair where I can see you."

Orrin sat as directed, an electric lantern shining painfully in his eyes, his hands thrust deep in his trousers pockets. "This will be the genuine third degree," he said to himself.

"It's your turn; speak your piece," the captain barked as Swarts came in with alacrity.

The detective recounted tersely the circumstances of the raid and his subsequent investigations.

Acting on information which had come to the department that a valuable truckload of bootleg was being dispersed from the old place on the corner of Ten Eyck Avenue and Boswell Street, and under instructions issued directly from the prosecutor's office, he had arrived in company with three other men in plain clothes from headquarters and six uniformed officers from the Ten Eyck Street station just after dark.

They had approached the house quietly through the trees, and had found a truck standing in the garage, with engine running, but before they had even begun to examine its cargo had been startled by cries and the sound of a scuffle in the basement of the house.

As they turned in the direction of the disturbance, somebody in the truck whose presence they had not suspected sent it down the drive into the street at a speed that made pursuit on foot hopeless.

Inside the basement they had found no one but an unidentified dead man in a chauffeur's uniform. There was conflicting opinion about the number

of persons in the house at the moment the police rushed the entrance of the basement; it was even said that a woman's voice had been heard, screaming, "But you will not hurry!" or perhaps, "But you are not sorry!"

The only captures were Mike Laffy, caretaker, and Gus Ginsberg, well-known character—outside, not inside the house—both of whom claimed to have arrived at the moment. The officers pursuing the truck had found it abandoned two blocks up the street.

He, Swarts, had discovered on the garage floor a hat with the name "Orrin Quire" on the sweatband, and after some gumshoe work, whose ingenuity he emphasized, had located his man at the home of Judge Van Dyl. The prisoner, so far had refused to tell the story of the killing or reveal the motive or the identity of the victim.

"Now you're going to talk," asserted O'Down, turning fiercely on Orrin once more when Swarts had finished his statement. "We've got you dead to rights and all we need to know is, who is this man you killed and why you done it."

Orrin had been doubting whether it would profit him to say anything about the crazy encounter with the schoolboys to explain his presence in the house. On one point he was quite determined: he wouldn't tell about the angel in knickers who had rescued him from his predicament.

He trembled with cold, for he was clad as he had emerged from the ballroom—without hat, overcoat or gloves. The other men wore heavy coats buttoned tight, breath making little clouds of steam in the chill air.

Swarts towered over him, an ugly blackjack displayed carelessly, and gritted: "And if he don't, I'm going to bean him."

Orrin made an involuntary attempt to gain his feet, having already seen an illustration of the meaning of the verb "to bean," but collapsed into his seat as quickly, under the impulse of a flat-

hand shove which the detective applied in the center of his white dress shirt.

The scholarly man whom the captain called chief came back at this critical moment. He laid an officer's overcoat across Orrin's knees with a brief impersonal nod, and going around to the other side of the desk grew up a chair and sat down beside the captain.

Orrin accepted the offer of the coat gratefully, but mutely, snuggled into the coat with a sigh of relief, while O'Down explained to the chief: "This is the fellow that did the killing; it was a hi-jacking job, just as I said. We were asking him some questions."

The chief looked at Orrin a moment in silence.

"It might be best all around if you were to tell me just what happened," he said. "What did you see? Take your time."

Orrin knew that this was a man of another order, that his technique would be different from the browbeating methods of the subordinates. He decided to begin with his sensations when he stepped off the bus and felt the bag drawn over his head.

The policeman on guard at the door interrupted at that moment, calling in a stage whisper: "His nibs is just outside. He's coming in—the prosecutor!"

There was a confused sound of footsteps and Judge Van Dyl entered, with three boys—a tall, thin one, a grotesquely dumpy one, and Master Orton Van Dyl—all very ill at ease. Crowding behind came the gentlemen of the press.

"Good evening, Mr. Prosecutor," the chief said politely.

"Good evening, Fred," Judge Van Dyl replied genially. "The interests of public health and safety lead us to keep irregular hours, eh?"

The reporters began pulling up chairs to the big desk and producing writing materials, grinning maliciously at the captain who scowled at them, but stood up and gave his seat by the chief to Judge Van Dyl.

"I am told," went on the prosecutor, beaming into the assembled faces, "that our information proved trustworthy, netting us a truckload of adulterated product valued at five thousand dollars. Unfortunately one more murder has been added to the list of violences growing out of the evil traffic.

"I know you will pardon the interruption, chief, when I explain how I happened to look in. These two boys, schoolmates of my son—'Kidder' and 'Chub'—called on me a few minutes ago to tell a strange story.

"They allege they have been making use of the Quire place, which they call the 'haunted house,' for the initiations of their high school secret society, having found the key of the garage in the lock one day recently. According to their confession, they abducted my son, Orton, this evening and imprisoned him in the empty swimming pool.

"Later, when they returned to free him, they found the police in possession of the house; and after spending some hours dodging around in the shrubbery, they came to me in tears.

"But the fact is, Orton knew nothing whatever of this, being safely at home where we have been giving a little birthday party."

Judge Van Dyl sought a rhetoric effect by pausing to take a cigar from his case, requesting casually of Orton, who was backed against the wall with his schoolmates: "Your pocketknife, son."

"You didn't give it back to me the last time, father," protested Orton.

"Tut! I returned it to you on the bus."

"No, father, you didn't—you could not. I wasn't on the bus. There was a crowd, and I didn't get on the bus before it started. I met a fellow I knew, and we went to the pictures and I just got home in time for dinner."

"In that case," concluded Judge Van Dyl, biting off the end of his cigar, "I gave your knife to some other passenger."

Orrin thought suddenly of the burned match.

The reporters, who had always found the absent-minded prosecutor good copy, dependable at any time for a column or so, smiled and waited.

"Where are you telephoning from?" one whispered to his neighbor.

"All night drug store just around the corner."

"Where did they take the hooch?"

"Hooch, you sap? It was bootleg cream and butter, run in from the Jersey side."

"And so," went on Judge Van Dyl, taking up the thread of his story, "I thought I would run over to see if we could be of any assistance."

He suddenly recognized Orrin wrapped in the policeman's overcoat.

"Bless my soul!" he cried in amazement.

Captain O'Down seized the opportunity to come back to business.

"This is the fella that done the murder, Mr. Prosecutor. He made his getaway in the bootleg truck, but he left his hat and we traced it and caught him. We always catch 'em. The chief was asking him some questions."

"Poppycock!" the judge exploded. "This is Mr. Orrin Quire, grandson of Henry Quire III; he is the heir to the Quire estate and owns this house. You arrested him because you found a hat of his here in his own house? By George, captain, I can't tell you—Poppycock! I wish I could think of a stronger word."

The reporters leaned forward eagerly. Here was a story! A man arrested because his hat was in his own house. But they didn't know half of it, Orrin thought to himself.

His own house! That was why he had the feeling he was looking at something familiar when he saw the old pile from the street—but now he was thinking of something else.

Here was a murder to be solved—and a murder in his house.

Orrin jumped suddenly to his feet.
"Will you pardon my interrupting?" he cried. "I've an idea."

He knew some things as an eyewitness that the others could not know; he had appreciated the unsuccessful effort to stampede Mike. The attempts of the police to get admissions by threat amused him at the same time that they suggested better methods. "If I might be permitted a word with the man Ginsberg and the watchman, sir"—the chief nodded to him almost imperceptibly—"I think I can untangle this mystery."

"Certainly, my dear boy," the prosecutor said cordially: "Whatever we can do in the interests of justice!"

Orrin opened the door. "Send in Mike Laffy and Honest Gus!"

Ginsberg came in first, to be motioned by Orrin with scant courtesy to the chair he had just vacated in the light of the brightest lantern. Next came Laffy; immediately behind him an officer with another prisoner, a small person in a huge raccoon coat.

"Here's a Jane we caught snooping around in the bushes," the policeman said. It was Lorraine.

Orrin sprang between her and her father, hiding her from his view.

Orrin groped behind him. She slipped her hand into his, whispering: "The butler told me you were arrested. I just had to come!"

Without answering her, Orrin began to talk quickly to Mike Laffy. The others in the room watched. He talked so low they could not hear. He seemed to threaten, to cajole; he darted glances which said clearly Ginsberg was the object of their barter.

Honest Gus had dropped his oily, good-humored pose. The newspaper men forgot their boredom and craned forward, interpreting the unheard bargaining and losing nothing of its effect on Ginsberg; the prosecutor's lips moved, translating what he saw into soundless words.

Suddenly Honest Gus stood up.

"It's a lie! It's all a lie!" he screamed. "I didn't raise my hand. Mike bashed him with the butt of his gun. I saw it and I can swear to it!"

Mike Laffy's answer was almost a scream. "You're a liar! I only did what you told me to! You said he double crossed us and he knew about the other guy we bumped off!"

"I'll talk," gasped Gus; "let me talk! I'll tell everything just as it happened—for the State."

Swarts already had the handcuffs on Laffy. Officers who had come in on the run at the first sound of uproar, were holding Ginsberg, explaining, promising and choking for breath.

When Ginsberg had exhausted himself and collapsed, moaning, Mike Laffy, whose surly temperament had more quickly recovered, turned on the shattered fat man.

"You yell cur," he sneered, "I always thought you was there with the brains. I didn't think you was fool enough to fall for that movie stuff. Why, I wasn't telling the boy nothin'—nothin' at all!"

He scowled at the corner where Orrin had stood. But Aunt Cassie's boy and Lorraine had slipped out.

Hours later the chief's car stopped in front of the prosecutor's house. The guests had all gone.

"A good night's work," said Judge Van Dyl, with undimmed enthusiasm. "The boy certainly handled his little demonstration in applied psychology!"

"Too well," returned the chief, in his thoughtful, quiet way. "He knew the whole story before they confessed. I am convinced that he was there. You would need him for a witness if it were not for the eagerness of the two crooks to tell on each other."

The prosecutor entering his roomy front veranda was startled to see a young girl bundled in his favorite winter coat and a young man in a policeman's blue coat sitting together in the hammock. He had to cough twice before they heard him.



"In ten seconds you'll get not my hand, but my boot!"

When Justice Was Blinded

A True Story

A Strange Case Where by a Trick of Fate the Victim's Blood Stained George Manners's Innocent Hands

By Joseph Gollomb

BLINDFOLDED stands the goddess man has chosen as symbol for legal justice; blindfolded to show that in judging she knows neither favorite, friend nor foe, only justice. Such is man's proud conception of his courts of law.

But if I believed there were ironic gods playing cruel jokes on man, it would seem to me that in the Manners-Lascelles case these gods pushed Justice off her pedestal and made her play blindman's buff, a groping and somewhat ludicrous figure, to remind man that after all he is not a maker of

gods or goddesses, but only a puppet himself.

Near Beckfield, in England, lived Edmund Lascelles, who jointly with sister Eva inherited a considerable fortune in farm lands all about them. They occupied an old Georgian mansion outside of Beckfield just where town meets country. The household consisted of Lascelles, his sister Eva, their housekeeper Mrs. Marsh, and two other women servants.

The brother and sister were a strongly contrasted pair. He was dark, she was fair; he had a rugged body,

hers was fragile; her nature was given to love while his was a sullen smoldering anger which broke out on the least provocation and had something contagious about it.

He was away one day visiting some of his farmer tenants—visits they little relished—when one of the Lascelles servants announced that Mr. George Manners was downstairs to see Miss Eva.

A Bitter Feud

The announcement was superfluous, because Miss Eva had been watching the driveway ever since her brother had left. It was not accident that George Manners came to call in her brother's absence. The two men did not get along together very well, and the temper between them was fast approaching a climax.

Manners was determined to marry Eva Lascelles; and her brother was determined that he should not. Eva was in anguish.

She loved George Manners as the man to whom all her nature turned. It was also her nature, however, to love her brother because he was her brother. The antagonism between these two men tore at her heart.

She tried to make peace, but while the man she wanted to marry was more than eager to help, she could do little with her brother. The very mention of George Manners seemed to be enough.

"He wants you for your money!" he would rage when Eva spoke of the man she loved.

"How can you say such a terrible thing?" For she knew better.

What made things worse was that he made it a point to denounce Manners and his motives before the servants. Whether he did this by accident or design, the servants knew what their master thought of Mr. Manners, and his tirades furnished drama in their otherwise dull life as provincial domestics.

Even when they were not supposed to hear, the housekeeper and the two maids would steal out to the stair landing to hear Lascelles hold forth on the subject of the man he was determined should not marry his sister.

Manners had inherited considerable money and land, and he had added to his wealth by his success as a lawyer in Beckfield. He was robust, and himself possessed of a temper. But his intelligence and his love for Eva Lascelles helped him put a curb on the things he wanted to say and do to that brother of hers who opposed his marriage.

For a long time he tried to win Lascelles's friendship. Failing that, he tried to avoid increasing his enmity. But nothing that he did or did not do helped matters. Eva tried to understand her brother in this matter. Then she gave up the effort and simply tried to keep them apart.

The Last Straw

But Manners determined to solve the mystery of Lascelles's antagonism—now he thought he knew the answer. It had taken some quiet investigation. Manners even engaged a London detective and put several of his office staff on the job—with the result that this time when he came to call on Eva Lascelles there was something in his manner she had never seen before.

The moment they were alone he said:

"Eva, your brother has stood between us and marriage long enough. To-day I'm not going to avoid him. I will wait till he comes back. I shall ask for his consent to our marriage. If he gives it—fine! If he does not—you and I will marry just the same."

Her heart sank at his belligerent tone; and her heart told her that he was right; he had been patient a cruelly long time for a man of his ardent nature.

Nevertheless, she made an effort to avert the inevitable.

"Let me talk to him once more, George!" she pleaded.

Gently he shook his head. "You know you have nothing to tell him he hasn't heard before. Whereas I have."

"Oh, what is it, George?"

He hesitated, and her intuition told her that for once he was not telling her the full truth. "Simply that I'm tired of waiting for his consent. You are of age and have the legal right to marry of your own will.

"Fortune Hunting"

"If he is still opposed—well, that is his misfortune as well as ours. If he tries to punish you by withholding anything that belongs to you by inheritance—why, I have enough for both of us. And—"

She sensed the beginning of a threat in his words; but he ended: "And that's that!"

Lascelles came back from his round of landlord visits in none too good a temper. As he came into the house he saw from the way the domestics lingered on the staircase that something more engrossing than housework was keeping them there.

"Where is Miss Eva?" he demanded.

"In the living room." Mrs. Marsh, the housekeeper, was the only one who dared to tell him, and her manner told him more than her words.

He strode to the living room and threw open the door. His sister was so startled that she seemed to her brother the embodiment of guilt. Whereas her lover faced him with a self-possession that made Lascelles lose his own.

He had left the door open through impetuosity. Now he went to it by design. He wanted the servants on the staircase to hear.

"You are a filthy fortune-hunter, sir! I have forbidden you the house. You have chosen to come here in spite of me. Your choice now is—get out or be thrown out!"

"Edmund," pleaded his sister. "Please!"

George Manners had just managed to put a curb on himself at Lascelles's words; but now the man's complete disregard of Eva was too much for the man who loved her.

He went to the open door, but he stopped in front of Lascelles.

"You've just said something about fortune hunting." His deliberation affected the other man worse than a blow. "For once I will admit that I have been hunting for Eva's fortune. Something told me that it was going fast and that you had much to do with its going.

"I have tried to keep the news from her—just as you have. Though for somewhat different reasons. Now I'll be interested to know—Eva, you may want to hear it, too—what you have to say to my charge that you have been converting much of her share to yourself!"

A Thrilling Drama

A cry from Eva shocked him with its pain. The man she loved had called her brother a thief, and the woman between them got the full brunt of the situation.

She sank into a chair, her hands pressed over her eyes to shut out the unbearable, and her cry had something stricken in it.

It shook George Manners to the heart. The servants on the stairs sensed in his voice a last desperate effort to make peace for the sake of their mistress.

"Lascelles," they heard Manners say, "I am holding out to you the hand of friendship. Will you give me yours?"

They heard their master cry out with fury:

"In ten seconds you'll get not my hand, but my boot!"

George Manners laughed softly.

"I think you will find it an interesting adventure." Then his tone

changed. "I am serving you notice that Eva and I are to be married within the month. I still ask your hand in amity. But if you don't give me your hand—my God, before I get through with you, you'll give it to me whether you want to or not!"

There was such passion in him now that the servants on the stairs thrilled with the drama of it. But for the time their show was over. Apparently afraid to trust himself any further, Manners rushed out of the house.

A Call for Help

A little later the servants saw their master leave the house too. His face was livid. In his hand was a riding-crop, and in the failing twilight he looked an ugly figure to encounter as he hurried out of the grounds.

The mood of George Manners as he swung off toward the town was not much different from Lascelles's. His jaws and his fist were clenched, and now that the curb of Eva's presence was off he was muttering to himself the things he thought of her brother.

Easily there was murder in the young man's heart, and the realization of it finally sobered him. He did not want to be seen in town in the grip of such a passion. Already he had passed several of his townsmen without a greeting, and they looked curiously at him.

He decided to walk it off, and, turning, struck out for the open country. By the time night had fallen, bringing with it a light rain, George Manners felt cooled off enough to turn back.

Whatever moonlight there might otherwise have been was blanketed by rain clouds, and the road along which he hurried toward the town was flanked by farmland and showed not a light. Manners was guided largely by the feel of the middle of the road.

Suddenly he tripped and sprawled in the road. Something lay under him, the feel of which brought him scrambling to his feet again. The road had

been wet by the rain, but he must have fallen into a puddle. For his hands, face and clothing were mired.

But he was too shocked to realize this. What had tripped him was an inert body in the road. Manners fumbled for matches, but his wet hands and the rain made it impossible to strike a light.

He kneeled and, groping for the shoulders, shook the man lying there so limply. Then Manners rose, and at the top of his voice sent a call into the night. "Help!"

For he knew now that whoever it was, was dead.

Again and again Manners cried out until from across a field he saw the glimmer of a lantern coming his way. Eventually the lantern revealed a man who turned out to be James Crosby, a laborer on the farm close by.

Serious Evidence

Crosby held up the lantern to the young attorney's face and recognized him. "Did you call, sir? Lawd, how mired you look!"

Then his lantern showed the body in the road.

"Lord bless me!" Crosby cried. "Is he drunk or—"

"Good God! It's Lascelles! And he's dead!"

Crosby, frightened though he was, could not help noting the consternation of the other man.

The farm man was not bright, but it did not take much intelligence to read fear in George Manners's tone. And now that Crosby raised his lantern again he saw that the attorney was smeared with something that could not be plain honest mud.

In the poverty-stricken life of the community the gossip of the state of affairs between Lawyer Manners and Edmund Lascelles was eagerly discussed for the color and drama it afforded. Even James Crosby knew of it.

Now there lay Edmund Lascelles in

the road. On his face and head were blood and the marks of a savage beating, many wounds pointing to an attack with fury.

And standing by his side, smeared with mire and blood, was Lawyer Manners.

"Don't keep staring at me!" Manners shouted. "Go and fetch help!"

If Manners were not so appalled with the vision of what he must convey to Eva he would have noticed a change in the manner of the farm hand toward him.

A Tragic Blow

"How do you know he's dead?" Crosby asked, with what he thought was well concealed suspicion.

But Manners curtly sent him off. Then he left for the Lascelles home.

Crosby returned with several farmers and a cart. They stooped to lift the body into the cart when simultaneously from two newcomers there broke a cry.

"Good Lord, his hand is gone!"

It was the right hand that was missing, hacked off at the wrist.

Meanwhile George Manners rang the bell of the Lascelles home and Mrs. Marsh, the housekeeper, opened the door. As the light from the hall fell on his face she cried out at the sight he made. But her emotion did not concern him—at least not at that time.

"I must see Miss Eva—" he began.

The bell had already brought Eva Lascelles out on the stairs. She heard her lover's voice and Mrs. Marsh's exclamation. His appearance, even before he could say a word, already cried out disaster; and his words were no less appalling.

"Eva—bear up, my dear! Edmund has been—murdered!"

For awhile she stared at him, her eyes distending with horror. Then she fell to the floor.

Manners started forward to raise her but realized that he was mired from

head to foot. "Mrs. Marsh, please tend her!"

The housekeeper drew back from him as if there were something leprous in his very speaking to her. "I don't need you to tell me my duty!" she snapped.

The two maids came running with cold water and helped Mrs. Marsh in her efforts to revive the girl. To Manners it seemed an endless time before Eva showed signs of coming back; and indeed it did take a long time to bring her back to consciousness.

The brutal blow of the news and the sight of her lover as he told it were terrible enough in themselves. But what had struck hardest was the thought that seared her like a bolt of lightning.

Her lover had killed her brother.

The moment she came back to consciousness she slipped off again and none of the household remedies the servants tried availed. Manners in his fear for her ran to call a doctor.

Incriminating Words

While he was still away the battered and mutilated body of Edmund Lascelles was brought home. In its train was an increasing crowd of farmer neighbors. In undertones but agitatedly news and comment flew from lip to lip.

"Manners's hands and face were a-drip with blood!" James Crosby reported.

"And Mr. Lascelles's righ hand has been hacked off! What I says is—"

Mrs. Marsh hurrying in and out of Eva's room stopped to contribute her bit! And indeed it was an important contribution.

"No more than a couple of hours ago," she said to those who had brought the body, "I heard and saw Manners and Mr. Lascelles quarrel in that very doorway. And Manners's last words were, 'By God, Lascelles, if you won't shake hands with me now I'll take your right hand from you whether you like it or no!' And that's how he's done it!"

"I knew he must 'a' done it!" Crosby explained.

"Are you sure o' what yer saying, Mrs. Marsh?" asked a substantial farmer seriously. "Because, you know, it's a serious thing yer telling us!"

The two maids of the house pushed forward.

"We heard 'im, too! Word fer word, as Mrs. Marsh tells yer!"

By the time Manners came back with the doctor, a committee of farmers had left for the nearest police station.

In the Lantern Light

George Manners was too distraught with the events of the night—especially because of the alarming way in which his beloved went from one fainting fit into another—to give thought to his own situation.

He stayed on at the Lascelles's house outside of Eva's room, trying to read Mrs. Marsh's face for news of the stricken girl. Then the doctor came out and what he told Manners kept the young man from attending to the change in the doctor's attitude toward him.

"She's hard hit!" the doctor said curtly and went back to his patient.

Toward morning heavy steps crunched on the gravel outside the house, then in the hall. The local police inspector with two other officers approached Manners.

"I'm sorry," said the inspector, "but I must take you into custody for the murder of Mr. Lascelles."

The young man, who thought he had already reached the depths, dazedly repeated, "For the murder of Mr. Lascelles? But I didn't murder him!"

"That will be for the magistrate to decide. I must ask you to come with me peaceably! And I warn you that anything you may say—" Poor George Manners must have felt that Inferno's ruler had chosen him that night for his own pleasure.

And by the time the day of his trial arrived he was sure of it. Only diabol-

ical ingenuity could have plotted such a complete and simple case against him as the prosecutor without the least effort was able to marshal.

The woman he loved, brought to the witness stand from her sickbed, faltered her answers to the prosecutor's questions. Yes, she was forced to admit, her brother had been against her marriage to the prisoner at the bar.

Yes, there was bad blood between the two men. There had been scenes. The last one, on the day of the murder was the worst. There had been threats and both men parted on a note of towering rage.

Mrs. Marsh was called to the stand and testified that she, too, had witnessed the scene.

"And the last thing he said was, 'Then, by God, if you won't shake hands with me friendly you'll give me your hand whether you like it or no!'"

The two maids of the house corroborated Mrs. Marsh's testimony to the syllable.

James Crosby, the laborer, told of hearing a cry for help on the night of the murder. Taking his lantern he hurried out on the road. He saw George Manners by the body of Edmund Lascelles. His face and hands were covered with blood and mud.

The Apathy of Hopelessness

The judge and jury had little choice other than to accept the obvious as truth. The enmity between the two men; their high tempers; the last quarrel between them, an hour or two before the murder; the blood on George Manners when Crosby discovered him by the side of the murdered man and worst of all, the threat in terms of the hand—there was no refuting the case all these evidences built up.

The jury brought in the verdict and the judge pronounced sentence. George Manners was to be hanged for the death of Edmund Lascelles.

And though the news was kept from Eva Lascelles in her sick room she

might just as well have been told it; for she was far gone with brain fever.

Manners had kept on repeating that he was innocent; but after the death sentence had been pronounced he sank into the apathy of hopelessness.

He had friends however who fought for him. With all the evidence against him some of them still felt that the brutal murder was not in the character of George Manners.

Keeping Late Hours

Justice, the blindfolded goddess, with her even scales in one hand and the sword of power in the other, might declare herself satisfied with the verdict. The friends of George Manners were not.

They worked so hard and so substantial was their joint influence that finally they won commutation of sentence for George Manners, from death to life imprisonment. The prisoner received the news with indifference. There was little to choose between death and a life spent in prison contemplation of the fate that had befallen him.

But his friends were not content with what they had accomplished.

One day two strangers from London came to Beckfield, tired business men, they told the host at the inn where they put up. They meant to smoke, stroll about the country, chat with the farmers and call it a holiday.

Inevitably they became interested in the Lascelles murder and visited several times the scene where it took place and its vicinity. They were sociable men, these strangers, who took a human interest in the murder and chatted with anybody they could get to talk about it.

In the course of time it seemed as though they acquired as much knowledge about the murder as the judge and jury had. What they kept to themselves was the fact that they began to acquire more knowledge than had been brought out in court.

They learned, for instance, that the farmer for whom James Crosby worked was a tenant of Edmund Lascelles. He was having such a hard time making his farm pay that at the time of the murder he was behind in rent; and being behind in rent with Edmund Lascelles, as everybody knew, was trying on the nerves. Also this farmer, Charles Parker, had a mean temper.

Now the two men from London began to keep late hours for a quiet town like Beckfield. Not that this attracted any one's notice; the two visitors were careful not to attract attention whenever they came back to the inn toward dawn. Least of all did the farmer, Charles Parker, suspect that it was on his farm the visitors spent their nocturnal hours.

For they had become interested indeed in Charles Parker. They had struck up an acquaintance with him and James Crosby; but their talk was of farming, the weather and like topics.

Occasionally Crosby would make them listen to his oft repeated dramatic experience on the night of the murder. Parker seldom alluded to it.

Unwelcome Visitors

He was a morose man, and once or twice said something about giving up the struggle and trying again in the wheatfields of Canada. For the rest, he avoided even casual chat and moped about his farm.

The two Londoners, from the corners of their eyes, watched the places Parker seemed to avoid as well as those that attracted him.

Finally he became irritated at the too frequent visits of the two Londoners and let them see that they had worn out their welcome. It was then that the two men from London began to do their visiting by night.

They came quietly, a lantern under the coat of one, a shovel secreted by the other. Quietly they would dig into the ground in stable stalls, barns and cellars.

Before they touched shovel to earth, however, they would study the chosen spot by the light of the lantern. But for weeks they got little for their labor.

Then one night they looked thoughtfully at a pile of litter in a broken-down barn of Parker's. They wonder why litter should be there, litter of just that kind, so far from its probable place of origin. They decided to dig.

They dug for an hour without results. Suddenly the man who was using the shovel, while the other held the lantern, said:

"Wait a minute!"

It was really an expression of excitement. For the light of his companion's lantern showed a gruesome object in the spadeful he had just dug up.

A little later his shovel encountered something else—a short butchering knife, its blade thickly rusted. The knife, together with the human hand, rewarded the two detectives' labors.

In the morning Charles Parker was arrested. The charge against him was the murder of Edmund Lascelles.

While he was being taken off to the police station the London detectives searched his house as thoroughly as they had his farm.

In one of Parker's pillows trained fingers encountered a small, hard object. It was a ring with a large sapphire set in it, known to have belonged to Edmund Lascelles.

When this discovery was put before Parker the stolid silence with which he had met all questions up to then came to an end. Despair, such as George Manners must have felt, broke up the farmer's resistance, and he confessed.

Sick cattle, poor crops and the everlasting nagging and bullying of Lascelles had done little to improve Parker's temper.

On the night of the murder his landlord came to see him and Parker got the benefit of the temper in which Lascelles had come away from his last interview with Manners.

Parker finally forgot that Lascelles was his landlord. He told Lascelles, for the first time, what he really thought of him. Whereupon Lascelles gave the farmer a good taste of his riding crop. Then the landlord strode out of the farmhouse.

For some minutes the farmer remained where he was, smoldering. The welts raised on his face by the riding crop burned his flesh as if with fire.

Then, rushing out into the kitchen, the farmer snatched up a knife and set out on the dark road after Lascelles. Before he overtook him, Lascelles heard him approach and turned. Again the farmer got the riding crop across his face. This time, however, he had an adequate retort.

Madly he stabbed Lascelles again and again, exultant whenever his blade sank into flesh. The struggle ended abruptly—Lascelles was dead.

With resistance gone, Parker's rage went. Utter fear and misery now possessed him. What was he to do when the crime should be discovered? Flight was his only hope. America—Australia—the farther the better! But how was he to get there, he who could not even pay the rental on his farm?

The sapphire ring on Lascelles's right hand was part of the unforgettable picture his match showed. Here was his one hope for escape, the ring! Stooping, he took up the hand and tried to pull the ring off.

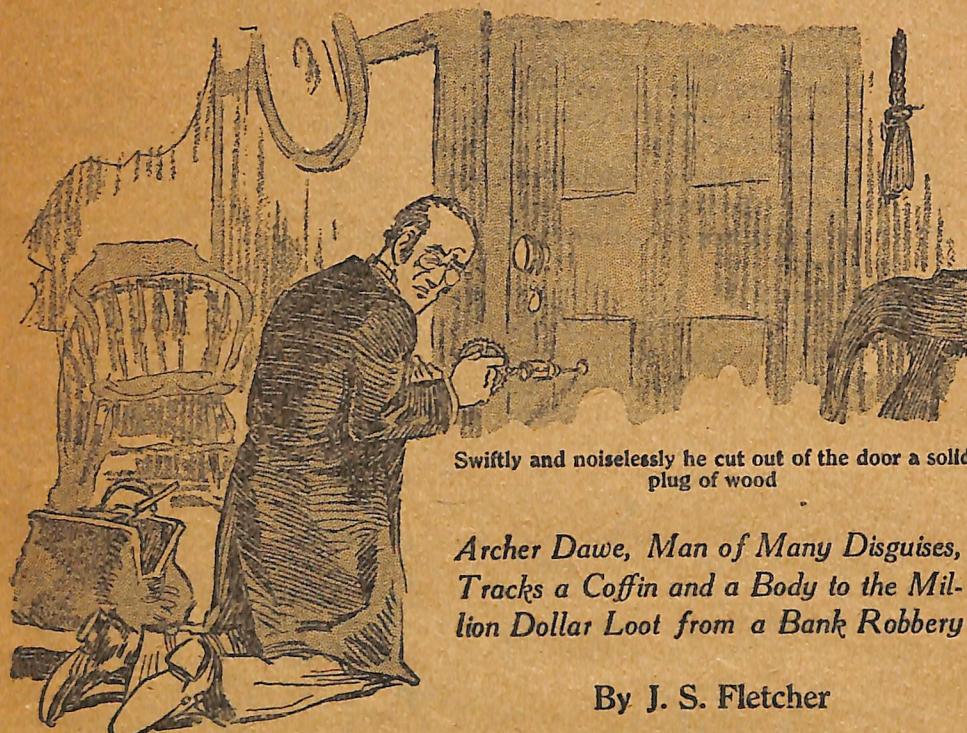
The hand resisted the effort as though the dead man still had strength. But Parker had to have that ring. And down the road some one was coming. In desperation as savage as had been his attack, Parker used the knife again.

He was tried, found guilty and executed.

George Manners was released, but had to wait weary months before the woman he loved recovered sufficiently to marry.

And Justice, whom the ironic gods had for the time pushed off her pedestal, regained it.

The Flight of Stephen Barr



Swiftly and noiselessly he cut out of the door a solid plug of wood

*Archer Dawe, Man of Many Disguises,
Tracks a Coffin and a Body to the Mil-
lion Dollar Loot from a Bank Robbery*

By J. S. Fletcher

GUILTY!"

The foreman of the jury uttered the fatal word with the hesitation of a man who is loath to voice the decision which deprives a human being of his liberty. He and his fellow jurymen kept their eyes away from the man in the dock; every one of them at some time or another had partaken of his good fare, drunk his vintage wines, smoked his cabinet cigars, and now—

" You find the prisoner guilty; and that is the verdict of you all?"

" We find the prisoner guilty, and that is the verdict of us all," repeated the foreman in dull tones.

Something in his mien suggested that he was glad to have to say no more. He and his eleven companions in the cramped-in jury-box wanted to get away, to breathe, to have done with

an ugly passage in the life of their little town. What need of more talking? It had been impossible not to find their old friend and neighbor guilty. Of course, he was guilty—guilty as Cain or Judas. Get the thing over.

The man in the dock seemed to share the opinion of the jury. His face was absolutely emotionless as he heard the fatal words drop limply from the foreman's lips, and he shook his head with something of a contemptuous smile when asked if he had anything to say as to why sentence should not be passed upon him. What was there to say?

" John Barr," said the stern-faced embodiment of justice whom he faced. " You have been convicted on the clearest evidence of the very serious crime of embezzlement. There were no fewer than nine counts in the indictment against you. It was only considered

necessary to proceed with one—that relating to your embezzlement during the month of July, 1926, of a sum of three thousand seven hundred dollars, the moneys of your employers, the Yorkshire Banking Company—and upon that charge you have been found guilty.

"But it has been clearly established during the course of your trial that this forms only a small part of your deprivations upon your employers' funds.

"I note that the sums mentioned in the nine counts total up to nine hundred and eighty-seven thousand dollars, and we have heard it stated by the prosecution that there are further sums to be accounted for, and that the probable total loss to the bank will exceed two million dollars.

"Now, there are several unfortunate features about this case, and not the least unfortunate lies in the fact that it is believed that a very considerable portion of the money which you have embezzled is at this moment at your disposal. Appeals have been made to you from time to time, since you were first committed for trial, to make restitution. All these appeals have been in vain.

"Now, if it be a fact that any part of the money of which you have robbed your employers is recoverable, let me beg of you to make proper restitution for the sake of your own conscience and the honor of your family, which, as I am informed, has long occupied a foremost position in this town.

"This has been a singularly painful case, and it is a painful thing for me, in the discharge of my duty, to feel obliged to pass upon you a sentence of ten years' penal servitude."

John Barr heard his sentence with as little show of emotion as he had heard the verdict of the jury. He looked round the court for a moment as if seeking some face.

A man sitting in a retired seat caught his eye—a man who bore a distinct resemblance to him, and who had lis-

tened to the whole of the proceedings with downcast head. This man was now regarding the convicted man with an intent look.

John Barr, for the fraction of a second, returned it; then, with a quick glance round him—the glance of a man who looks at familiar objects and faces for the last time—he bowed to the seat of justice, turned, and was gone.

The people who had crowded the court since the door first opened that morning streamed out into Market Place. There were several cases to come on yet, but the great case of the day was over, and all Normancaster wanted to get somewhere to talk over the result.

Ten years' penal servitude!—well, it was only what any one could expect. And two million dollars—and had John Barr disposed of some of it in such a fashion that he could handle it when he came out of prison?

Men were gabbling like geese over these questions, and particularly over the last, as they crossed the cobblestones of Market Square.

Two men, leaving the court together, drew aside from the throng and turned into a quiet street. One of them, a big, burly, bearded man, was obviously excited; the other, an odd-looking little individual, dressed in an antique frock coat and trousers much too short to reach the tops of his shoes, wore a rusty, old-fashioned hat far back on his head, and carried a Gamplike umbrella on his arm. You would have thought him an oddly-attired, respectable old party who had retired on some pension.

None of the people in the court that day had known him for Archer Dawe, the famous amateur detective, expert criminologist, a human ferret—none, at least, but the man at whose side he now walked.

This man led Archer Dawe down a side street to the door of an office which formed part of the buildings of a big factory. He unlocked the door. They

entered. He locked the door behind them. Then, without a word, but pointing Archer Dawe to a seat, he went over to a cupboard, brought out whisky, soda, glasses, and a box of cigars, and motioned the little man to help himself. They had both lighted cigars, both taken a hearty pull at their glasses before the big, bearded man spoke—spoke vehemently:

"Dawe, it's a damned plant!"

Archer Dawe took another pull at his whisky-and-soda.

"What's your notion, Mr. Holland?" he inquired.

Mr. Holland stamped up and down his office for a few minutes. Then he fell to swinging his arms.

"It's a damned plant, Dawe!" he repeated. "And that chap Stephen Barr is in it as well as John. John's going to take the grueling—being the younger and stronger. He'll be a model prisoner—he'll get out in some seven and a half years. Lord! What's that? And then—"

He fell to stamping the floor, to waving his arms again.

"You mean," said Archer Dawe, "you mean—"

"I mean that they've got the money. It hasn't gone on the Stock Exchange. It's not gone on the turf. It's not gone over the card table. They've got it. It's planted somewhere as safe as—as safe as I am standing here, Dawe! Did you see John give Stephen that look before he left the dock? Eh?"

"I did," replied Archer Dawe.

"Now, I wonder what that meant? But—or, hang it," exclaimed Mr. Holland, "don't let's theorize—I want you to keep an eye on Stephen Barr. It's lucky that nobody knew you here in Normancaster—they would think this morning that you were some old fogey who'd just dropped into the court for an hour or so—you know, eh?"

"The matter stands thus," said Archer Dawe slowly. "John Barr, who for ten years has been manager of the Yorkshire Bank here in Nor-

mancaster, has been to-day convicted of the crime of embezzlement and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. You, as a director of that bank, know that he has secured close upon two million dollars. You, personally, believe that—eh?"

"I believe, as a private individual, that both of them have been in at this, that John's going to do his seven and a half years, and that in the meantime Stephen's going off to some other clime, there to prepare a comfortable place for his brother," said Mr. Holland. "Why, bless me, John Barr will only be forty-three when he comes out, even if he serves the whole ten years—which he won't. And Stephen isn't anything like fifty yet. I've known them both since they were boys."

"Your plan of campaign, Mr. Holland?" said Archer Dawe.

"Well, I have one, I'll confess, Dawe," answered Mr. Holland. "I'm going to have it communicated to Stephen Barr by a secret channel this afternoon that application for a warrant for his arrest is to be made to the borough magistrates first thing tomorrow morning. I want to see if that won't stir him."

"Now, I happen to live exactly opposite his house, and I shall have a watch kept on his movements. I want you to stay here in my private office—there, you see, is a bedroom attached to it, with all conveniences, so that you'll be comfortable if you have to stay the night, and, of course, I'll see that you have everything in the shape of food and so on. If I telephone you that Stephen Barr makes a sudden move from his house you'll be ready to follow him—you've plenty of disguises, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," answered Archer Dawe, with a glance at his old suitcase. "But, Mr. Holland, do you think that Stephen Barr would set off from here like that? Wouldn't it look like—giving himself away?"

"No," replied Mr. Holland. "And

for this reason—Stephen Barr always goes up to town once a week—has done so for the last two years—why, nobody knows. He has no particular day; sometimes it's Monday, sometimes Thursday, sometimes Friday. My notion is that if he's startled by the rumor about the warrant he'll go to-night. If he does I want you to go with him, and to keep an eye on him."

"Then in that case I shall hold myself in readiness an hour before the night train starts," said Archer Dawe.

"And in the meantime," said Mr. Holland, "I shall put you in charge of a confidential clerk of mine who will see that you are properly taken care of, and will be at your disposal. Here, I'll have him in and introduce him."

If anybody had been able to look through the carefully-closed blinds of Mr. Holland's office at a quarter past seven o'clock that evening they would have seen a dapper little gentleman who, from his attire, might have been a judge, a doctor or a barrister, leisurely finishing a bottle of claret in company with a younger man, who was obviously lost in admiration of his elderly friend's cleverness in the art of making up.

"Well, you're a perfect marvel in that line, Mr. Dawe," said the confidential clerk. "I go in a good deal myself for amateur theatricals, but I couldn't make up as you do, sir. Now that you've got into those clothes and done your hair in a different fashion, you look another man. And it's your attention to small details, sir—that black cravat with the old-fashioned gold pin, and the gold-rimmed spectacles instead of your ordinary ones—my word, those little touches do make a difference!"

"It's the details that do make a difference, young man," said Archer Dawe. "And no detail is too small or undignified—"

A sharp tinkle of the telephone bell interrupted him. He nodded to the clerk.

"Take the message," he said. "If it's from Holland tell me word for word what he says."

In another minute the clerk turned to him. "Mr. Holland says: 'Barr has just left his house, obviously for the station. Tell Dawe to follow him wherever he goes.'"

"Answer 'All right,'" said Archer Dawe.

He drank off his claret as the clerk hung up the receiver again and began to button his smartly-cut morning coat. His glance wandered to an overcoat, a traveling bag and a glossy hat which lay set out in orderly fashion on a side table.

"There's lots of time, Mr. Dawe," said the clerk, interpreting the glance. "You see, Barr lives opposite to Mr. Holland, a good three-quarters of a mile from here. He'll walk to the station and he'll have to pass down this street—the station's just at the bottom. We can watch him pass this window—there, you can see out."

Archer Dawe nodded. With a tacit understanding he and the clerk posted themselves at the window, arranging one of the slats of the Venetian blinds so that they could see into the street beneath.

Everything was very cold and still. No one came or went, up or down, until at last a man, cloaked to the eyes, carrying a bag, hurried into the light of the opposite electric lamp, crossed it and disappeared into the gloom again.

"That's Barr!" whispered the clerk. Archer Dawe looked at his watch.

"Eight minutes yet," he said. "Plenty of time."

The clerk helped the amateur detective on with his fashionable fur-lined overcoat and handed him his fashionable derby hat and gold-mounted umbrella.

"By George, you do look a real old swell!" he said, with an admiring chuckle. "Wish I could get myself up like that—it's fine."

"Good-by," said Archer Dawe.

He slipped quietly out into the fog and made his way to the station. There was no one on the platform but Stephen Barr and two or three porters, moving ghostlike in the fog. The mail came steaming in and pulled up, seeming to fret at even a moment's delay. Stephen Barr stepped in. Archer Dawe followed. The train was off again.

For a while these two, sitting side by side in the club car, scarcely spoke except to remark on the coldness of the night. At last Archer Dawe remarked pleasantly:

"It's a great convenience to have an hotel attached to the station. One doesn't feel inclined to drive far after a four hours' journey at this time of night and this season of the year. It's something to be able to step straight from the train into your hotel."

Stephen Barr nodded.

"Yes," he said, "and a very comfortable hotel it is, too. I always stay there when I come to town; it is very convenient, as you say."

"And to those of us who happen to be passing through town," said Archer Dawe, "it is much pleasanter to break the journey here than to be driven across the city at midnight to another station. Old men like me, sir, begin to appreciate their little comforts."

The same porter carried Stephen Barr's bag and Archer Dawe's bag into the hotel. The clerk in the office gave Stephen Barr No. 45 and Archer Dawe No. 46.

Stephen Barr and Archer Dawe had a smoke together in the smoking room before retiring and enjoyed a little friendly conversation. Archer Dawe was perhaps a little garrulous about himself. He gave Stephen Barr to understand that he, Archer, was a famous consulting physician in New York; that he had been up State to an important consultation, and that he had spent a few hours at Normancaster on his way back to visit an old friend.

He also mentioned incidentally that he might stay in town for a day or two,

as he was anxious to see one or two experiments which were just then being carried on in some of the medical schools. Stephen Barr thought his traveling companion a very pleasant old gentleman.

In the privacy of No. 46 Archer Dawe sized up Stephen Barr as a man who at that moment was brooding over some big scheme and would probably lie awake all night thinking about it. As for himself, he meant to sleep, but he had first of all some work to do, and he set to work to do it as soon as the corridor was quiet.

Had any of the hotel officials seen what it was that Archer Dawe did they would have jumped to the conclusion that a burglar was in the house. He produced from his bag a curiously ingenious instrument with which he swiftly and noiselessly cut out of the door of his room a solid plug of wood about one-third of an inch in diameter —cut it out cleanly, so that it could be fitted in and withdrawn at will. Withdrawn, the orifice which it left commanded a full view of the door of 45 opposite; fitted in again, nobody could have told that it had ever been cut out.

This done, Archer Dawe went to bed. But early in the morning he was up and at his peephole, waiting there patiently until Stephen Barr emerged for breakfast. Archer Dawe seized his chance at once. He darted across the corridor, secured the key of 45, and in a moment had got an excellent impression of it in wax.

The specialist from New York, more talkative and urbane than ever, begged permission to seat himself at Stephen Barr's table when he entered the coffee room and found that gentleman breakfasting alone. They got on very well, but Archer Dawe decided that his traveling companion of the previous evening was still deep in thought and had spent most of the night awake. He noticed also that Stephen Barr had a poor appetite.

Going into the smoking room an

hour later Archer Dawe found Stephen Barr in conversation with a man about thirty years of age—a man who seemed to have a strong family resemblance to him. They were in the quietest corner of the room, and their conversation was being carried on in whispers. Presently they left the room and Archer Dawe saw them go upstairs together.

After a time Archer Dawe walked out of the hotel, went across to the station, and wrote out two telegrams. The first was addressed to Robert Holland, Normancaster, and ran as follows:

I have him here and under observation. He is in conversation with man of apparently thirty, medium height, light complexion, sandy hair and mustache, blue eyes, wears eyeglasses; has strong resemblance to Stephen and John. Say if you know anything of this man.

The other was addressed to a certain private detective agency :

Send Mason here in character of clergyman, to lunch with me at half-past one. Tell him to ask for Dr. Archer, and to meet me in the smoking room.

This done, Archer Dawe, carrying his wax impression with great care, took a cab and set off to a certain establishment which he knew of, where, before noon, a quick workman turned out a brand new key. Getting back to the hotel a little before one he found a telegram awaiting him. He carried it into the smoking room and opened the envelope.

The man you describe is undoubtedly their nephew, James. He was at one time a solicitor, but was struck off the rolls three years ago, after conviction for misappropriation. Watch them both and spare no expense.—Holland.

Under the very eyes of Stephen Barr and his nephew, who were again conversing in a quiet corner, Archer Dawe tore this communication into minute shreds. He affected to take no notice of the Barrs, but he saw that they had a companion with them—a man, who, from his general appearance, he set

down as a medical practitioner. Glancing at this person from time to time, Archer Dawe formed the conclusion that he was much of a muchness with the younger Barr—there was something furtive and shifty, if not absolutely sinister in his face. And Archer Dawe was a past master in the art of reading character in faces.

Whatever the conference was about among these three it broke up just before Archer Dawe was expecting Mason. The two Barrs rose, shook hands with the third man, and walked with him towards the door.

"Then I'll expect you and Dr. Hislop at seven o'clock to-night, doctor?" said Stephen, in a loud voice. "We'll dine and go to the theatre afterwards. And, by the bye, I wish you'd bring me another bottle of that medicine you gave me last time—I've had a touch of the old complaint again this morning."

"I will," replied the third man. "But if you've felt any symptom of that sort, let me advise you to keep quiet this afternoon. You'd better lie down for a while after lunch."

Stephen Barr nodded and smiled, and the stranger left, as Mason, in the correct attire of a prosperous-looking clergyman, entered the room. He and Archer Dawe greeted each other in a manner befitting their respective parts, and were soon in apparently genial and friendly conversation.

The two Barrs had retired to their corner again; in the center of the room three young gentlemen in very loud clothes were discussing in equally loud voices the merits of certain race horses. Otherwise the room was empty.

Archer Dawe gave Mason a brief outline of the case as it had so far been revealed to him. His notion, he said, was that some plot was afoot by which Stephen Barr was to get clear away without exciting suspicion, and that that plot was to be worked there, in the hotel.

"And that's why I sent for you," he concluded. "I can't work the thing

alone. I want you to find men who can keep a steady watch on every exit from this place and can be trusted to follow Stephen Barr wherever he goes, whether it's day or night. I've a strong notion that some coup is in brewing for to-night."

"That's done easily enough," answered Mason. "If we can keep a watch on him for the next two hours I'll engage that he won't move a yard without being followed. Here, I'll go round to the nearest station and telephone at once, and then come back to lunch with you."

Two hours later the pseudo-clergyman and the pseudo-doctor having lunched together and afterwards taken their ease over coffee and cigars, the former again absented himself for a while, and came back smiling.

"That's all right, Mr. Dawe," he said. "He can't move a foot out of this place without being shadowed—night or day. Make yourself easy. And now I must be off—let me know if you want anything further, and let's hear how it goes on."

Then the two separated, and Archer Dawe, knowing that his man was under the strictest surveillance, went out for a constitutional.

Returning to the hotel just after six o'clock, he was met on the corner by a plainly dressed man who first smiled, then winked, and as he passed him, whispered his name.

"One of Mr. Mason's men, sir," he said, as Archer Dawe came to a standstill. "The man has been out this afternoon—he and the younger man drove first to an office in Madison Avenue, stayed there a quarter of an hour, and then drove to the Bank of Argentina. They were there half an hour; then came back here. They're safe inside, sir. We're keeping a strict watch—there's plenty of us on the job."

Archer Dawe had a table all to himself that night at dinner. Mr. Stephen Barr's party occupied one close by. There were five of them—Stephen

himself, his nephew, the man Archer Dawe had seen with them that morning, another man whom he conjectured to be the Dr. Hislop he had heard mentioned, and a lady of about thirty whom he soon put down as the nephew's wife. There was a good deal of laughing and talking amongst this party, and Stephen Barr himself seemed to be its life and soul.

Dinner was nearly over, and Archer Dawe, straining his ears for all they were worth, and using his eyes when he dared, had neither seen nor heard anything that gave him assistance. But there was suddenly a slight commotion at the next table. Looking round, he saw that Stephen Barr had fallen back in his chair, and was pressing one hand over the region of his heart—the other was crushing his eyes and forehead, whereon a frown as of deep pain had gathered. He groaned.

The men at Stephen Barr's table sprang to their feet. One of them beckoned to a waiter. Ere the rest of the people in the room had grasped the situation the three men and the waiter were carrying Stephen Barr away. The lady, obviously much distressed, followed in their wake.

Archer Dawe beckoned to the head-waiter, who was standing near.

"I'm afraid that gentleman's very ill," he said.

"Yes, sir. I've seen him like that before, sir. It's his heart, sir. Well-known customer here, sir. Those two medical gentlemen have attended him here before, sir, often—Dr. Hislop and Dr. Brownson. Very weak heart, I should say, sir. Carry him off some day—sudden."

Archer Dawe finished his dinner hurriedly and slipped upstairs to his own room, slipped into it unobserved by any one. And once inside, he drew out the plug from the hole in the door, and settled himself for what might be a long and wearying vigil.

During the next hour Archer Dawe saw many strange things. A few min-

utes after he had posted himself with his eye to the peephole which his foresight had devised, the man whom he now knew as Dr. Brownson came hurriedly out of 45, and sped away along the corridor. Archer Dawe heard the key turned upon him as he left the room. This was at exactly eight-twenty.

At eight-forty this man came just as hurriedly back. He was accompanied by a tall, middle-aged woman in the garb of a district nurse, and he carried a small, black bag in his hand. He tapped twice at the door of 45, and he and the woman were instantly admitted. Once more Archer Dawe heard the key turned in the lock.

At eight-forty-eight the door was opened again. Three people came out. One of them was the man the waiter said was Dr. Hislop; another was James Barr; the third was the lady who had made the fifth at Stephen Barr's dinner table. She leaned on James Barr's arm and held a handkerchief to her eyes. Again the door was locked as soon as those leaving the room had crossed the threshold.

Archer Dawe slipped out of his room as soon as he thought these people would be clear of the corridor and the stairs. He reached the hall in time to see the two men assisting the lady into a taxicab. She still held the handkerchief to her eyes and seemed to be in great grief.

When the cab had driven away the two men stepped back into the hotel, and went to the manager's office. There they remained for some minutes. Coming out at length, they went upstairs again.

Archer Dawe strolled out to the door, making pretense of examining the weather. Turning in again he was met by the under-manager, who smiled in an apologetic manner.

"I believe, sir," he said, in a low voice, "you are the gentleman in 46?"

"I am," replied Archer Dawe.

"Well, sir, of course, it is necessary to keep these sad affairs very quiet in a

hotel, as you are aware. The poor gentleman in 45, the room opposite yours, is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir—he died twenty minutes ago. Heart failure. You are, I believe, a medical man, sir. Yes, then you will understand. He had his own two doctors with him at the time—nothing could be done. He has had these attacks here before. I was wondering if you would like to be transferred to another room, sir?"

"No, I don't know that I should—I am not squeamish about these things," replied Archer Dawe.

"Well, sir, I thought it best to mention it to you. Certainly the—the body will not be in the house all night. As the doctors were well acquainted with the deceased gentleman's complaint they will be able to certify, so there will be no need for an inquest. A—a coffin is coming at half past ten, sir, and they are going to remove the body to Normancaster, where the dead gentleman lived, by the night train. These two gentlemen are going to make arrangements now, sir, I believe."

Archer Dawe turned and saw James Barr and Dr. Hislop descending the staircase. They passed him and the under-manager, went down the steps of the front entrance, and separated, Barr crossing over to the station, and Hislop entering a cab.

"No, you need not change my room, thank you," said Archer Dawe to the under-manager, and left him. "I do not mind at all."

He dawdled about the smoking room for a while, then went upstairs again. And once more he applied himself to the hole in the door. At nine-ten the nurse came out, followed by the man whom he knew as Dr. Brownson. Brownson locked the door and put the key in his pocket. He and the nurse went along the corridor whispering. Archer Dawe cautiously opened his door and tiptoed after them until he saw them descend the stairs. Then he

hurried back. Now was his chance! The two women were gone; the three men were gone. There could be nothing in 45 but—what?

In another instant he had whipped out the key which he had caused to be made that morning, had slipped it into the lock of the door behind which so much mystery seemed to be concealed, and had entered the room. His hand sought and found the electric light, and as it flashed out he took one swift glance around him.

The room was empty. Empty! There was neither dead man nor living man in it. Everything was in order. Two large trunks stood side by side against the wall; a large traveling bag, strapped, stood near them; a smaller one, which Archer Dawe recognized as that which Stephen Barr had had with him the night before, stood, similarly strapped, at the foot of the bed. But on the bed itself there was no stark figure. The room was empty.

Archer Dawe saw all these things in a moment. He turned out the light, relocked the door, and went downstairs into the smoking room, where he sipped a whisky and soda. On the other side of the room Dr. Brownson was similarly employed. As Archer Dawe looked at him he thought of Holland's words of the previous afternoon. "Dawe, it's a damned plant!"

But where could Stephen Barr be? How had he slipped out of the hotel unobserved? Well, anyway, unless he had very skillfully disguised himself, Mason's men would follow him. He must wait for news. At ten minutes past ten James Barr came back and joined Brownson; at twenty minutes past Archer Dawe went upstairs. And once more he glued his eye to the little peephole.

A few minutes later James Barr and Brownson came upstairs and entered 45. Five more minutes went by, and then the watcher heard the tread of feet sounding on the corridor. Then Hislop came into view—followed by

four men carrying an oak coffin. Two other men came behind.

And now Archer Dawe noted a significant circumstance. When Hislop tapped at the door and James Barr opened it, these two and Brownson took the coffin and carried it within the room. Then the door was locked. Twenty-five minutes went by—the door was opened. The six men entered the room—came out again, carrying the coffin. They went away with it by the way they had come, Hislop following them. Barr and Brownson came out of the room, locked the door, and went downstairs. When Dawe, following them, reached the hall, they were crossing from the hotel to the station.

At that moment a cab, the driver of which had obviously been ordered to forget all about speed ordinances, dashed up to the entrance. Mason sprang out and ran up the steps. He saw Archer Dawe—seized him.

"Dawe!" he exclaimed. "We got him—got him on the steamship pier. He was off for Argentina. We got him to headquarters, and, by George, he's given us the slip after all—for ever! He must have had something concealed in a hollow tooth—he's poisoned himself."

"Dead!" exclaimed Archer Dawe.

"As a door-nail!" said Mason. "But—we found more than a million dollars' worth of securities on him."

Archer Dawe dragged him out of the hotel and across to the station.

"Quick man, quick!" he cried. "The coffin—the coffin—and the other three men. Get half a dozen police—"

When they had dispatched Barr, Dr. Brownson, and Dr. Hislop to the nearest police station, Archer Dawe, Mason, and some wondering railway officials broke open the coffin in which, according to the plate upon it, the remains of Stephen Barr rested. There was a moment of suspense when the lid was removed.

Lead ingots, carefully and skillfully packed tight in cotton wool.

The Blue Box from Tiffany's

A True Story



The address was in an unknown hand and there was no name of the sender

A Rare Poison Sends a Man to Trial for the Murder of Someone He Had Never Seen Nor Heard of

By H. W. Corley

THE widely famed Molineux case of the late nineties ranks among the celebrated trials of criminal history of all time and is one of the most noted mysteries known to American law, interesting for two particular reasons.

One, it was the first case in which an American had ever been accused of poisoning a rival.

Two, the poison involved had not, up to that date, appeared more than three times in the entire crime annals of the world.

Then, too, the accused man went

to trial for the murder of some one whom he had never seen, and of whom, very likely, he had not even heard.

The case was talked of everywhere, it occupied the minds of the social set; legal circles discussed it, and the man on the street found much therein to occupy his attention.

The case has a proper beginning, possibly, in 1895 when, at the corner of Madison Avenue and Forty-Fifth Street, there was built the Knickerbocker Athletic Club, at first exclusive, then embroiled in a famous murder trial and now extinct.

The club, an outgrowth of the Pequod Association, provided its members with the latest equipment and training in physical culture and furnished living quarters for young bachelors, at the very negligible price, even then, of two dollars a day.

Henry Crossman Barnet, forty years old, stocky sportsman rather than athlete, fond of society and comfortable living, attended the club not so much because of its gymnastic privileges as because when not aboard some yacht or other he found it a very pleasant place to dwell there.

An Amateur Acrobat

Barnet had a brokerage business in Broad Street requiring not too much of his attention, an affable manner, a flair for society and a Vandyke beard.

Roland B. Molineux was the central figure of the affair.

Molineux was younger than Barnet, less than thirty at the time the Knickerbocker opened its doors, and his connection with the club was largely for the gymnastics.

He was born in Brooklyn, son of General Edward Leslie Molineux, commander of the Seventh Regiment, and manufacturer of paints, oils and dry colors. He was of French extraction, which accounted to a large extent for his suave manner and undeniable charm, was educated in the common schools of Brooklyn, and as he grew older showed a distinct liking for chemistry.

He went to a polytechnic institute, where he majored in sciences, then he graduated and worked for his father for several years.

He was singularly pleasing in appearance and manner, and at the tender age of sixteen there is a record of an entanglement in a divorce case, from which predicament his family withdrew him and sent him to New Mexico to meditate.

While working in his father's factory he saw an advertisement for a sim-

ilar position in Newark, with a firm known as Herrmann's. He applied by letter, received the appointment and left his father's employ.

When the club opened Molineux had already made a name for himself at the Brooklyn Y. M. C. A. in amateur athletics, and at the suggestion of some friends that he add the glory of his prowess to the list of the newly formed club, he joined the Knickerbocker.

He moved then, bag and baggage, to Madison Avenue, commuting to Newark by trolley and the Cortlandt Street ferry, this being before the days of tubes or tunnels.

The club gladly welcomed Molineux, his reputation as an amateur horizontal bar performer extended over the country and he rivaled professionals in his work on the trapeze and flying rings.

At the factory his executive skill, combined with his unusual ability in color work won him the position of superintendent, while at the Knickerbocker his interest in club affairs soon placed him on the house committee. And this is where another man, in whom the case is interested, comes into the tale.

A Deep Dislike

This man was Harry S. Cornish, who was director of physical training at the Knickerbocker. Since the young chemist was constantly in the gymnasium, Cornish saw much of Molineux. Molineux was the better athlete, though he looked anything but the part, being delicately built and æsthetic in appearance.

Cornish, famous trainer and athlete of the day looked the typical athlete. He was overbearing in manner, to those who he thought could not jeopardize his position, and cringing to those who could. And since he could not, for some time, decide to which class Molineux belonged, his behavior in that quarter was uncertain.

There is no question in the world that there was bad blood between Mol-

ineux and Cornish. Even the most casual member of the club knew of its existence. Yet for all that Molineux disliked Cornish, no one had heard any active expression of that dislike, many said that they could hardly imagine his saying an ill-tempered or ill-mannered thing, no matter what the provocation.

But as the years went on the animosity increased and brought added proof of its depth and seriousness.

Half the club, for example, recalled the occasion of the amateur circus performance given by the members of the gymnasium in which Molineux was featured and Cornish figured as director.

The First Encounter

There were one or two scenes of displeasure which in the hands of any one save Molineux would have been embarrassing to the onlookers.

Molineux complained that Cornish did not know his place, that he mingled too familiarly with the guests of the members. And Cornish had his bit to say about the well-fitting costumes and the cosmetics used by the star performer, who seemed aware of the attractive figure he presented in action.

"That man is a positive boor," the chemist had said several times.

"Molineux's a snob!" came from Cornish.

Cornish went so far one afternoon as to call Molineux, behind his back, of course, a rumseller—a name carrying greater contempt in those days.

But only when the athlete took his pen in hand to write scathing criticisms of a friend did Molineux blow up.

Barney Wevers, the great sprinter of the time, received a letter from Cornish criticizing a man named Bartow S. Weeks on some point of minor athletics. How the letter fell into Molineux's hands is not known. Yet fall it did and he carried it to the governors of the Knickerbocker Club, demanding the dismissal of Cornish.

Now Weeks, aside from being a friend of Molineux as well as other members of the club, was also president of the New York Athletic Club, an honored and rival organization.

The governors sent around their apologies—for Weeks, too, had heard of the note—decided that this was ample restitution and declined to go further in the matter.

Quite naturally the trainer decided that he had won a point in a personal quarrel. He could not let the matter rest at that and the next time he met Molineux said to him sneeringly.

"Well, you didn't get me out, did you?"

It is odd to observe that Molineux's answer was couched in the terms which would probably have been employed to-day.

"You win," said Molineux cheerfully, and hurried down the stairs to keep an appointment.

In relating this encounter, Molineux told friends that Cornish called him a vile name—as usual—and remarked that his obscene conversation in the gymnasium and dressing rooms was lowering the tone of the club.

Molineux Resigns

Cornish denied it, but other members testified to frequent lapses on the part of the physical director into vulgarity which was, to say the least, below the standards set by good taste.

"This club isn't large enough to hold us both," Molineux said, and at about that time Weeks invited him to join the New York Athletic Club where he felt that things would be far more pleasant.

He gave in his resignation, which was accepted, and quit the place.

The new club did not offer living quarters and for this reason Molineux took some rooms in a building of the factory at Newark which were made quite comfortable and which were convenient in the event of late hours in his office. But for the most part, his so-

cial activities and club membership brought him to New York each night.

There was one result at least, of Molineux's aversion to Cornish. The athletic director was asked to live outside the club and his rooms were turned over to the use of a member.

He went to live with a Mrs. Katherine Adams, a distant relative whom he called aunt, in her flat on Eighty-Sixth Street.

Here in the Adams flat also lived Mrs. Laura Rodgers, and her son, daughter and grandson of Mrs. Adams. Mrs. Rodgers, separated from her husband, had an excellent alimony, which with what Cornish paid, allowed the family to live in ease.

A "Persecuted Saint"

Later, the investigation tried to prove that the athlete was unduly interested in the divorcee. This theory, however, failed to gain any ground and the idea was dismissed after three days.

Now, of course, Cornish never saw Molineux, who gave the Knickerbocker Club a wide berth. Occasionally he would hear of him at some athletic meet, or from some of the members. He saw Barnet, who frequently ran into the young chemist socially and with whom a social friendship was maintained.

These were happy days for Molineux, for he had by this time formed an acquaintance with a certain Miss Blanche Cheeseborough, an acquaintance fast ripening into a romance.

Molineux, usually aloof and detached where women were concerned became at once infatuated when he met her.

Miss Cheeseborough has been described in the press in more various ways probably than any other woman ever appearing in the news. In those days it was not the duty of the reporter to call the woman of whom he wrote beautiful, unless she happened to merit the term.

Miss Cheeseborough therefore was

called everything ranging from downright ugly to exceedingly lovely. Some called her plain, referring disparagingly to the glass eye, the result of an accident in childhood; others referred to the eye as just the point which gave her charm.

She was in her early twenties, undeniably prepossessing, and endowed with the quality called style.

"Plain until she smiles," one man wrote of her, "and then a vague dimple appears in the corner of her mouth, her upper lip lifting curiously like that of a teasing puppy."

Some one who saw her later under difficult circumstances said that she had the look of a "persecuted saint." All agreed that she was poised, mysterious, inscrutable, fascinating to a degree.

And, consequently, Roland Molineux had many rivals.

Her life history, too, is interesting. She had come to New York from Rhode Island with her parents who died subsequently, leaving her in the ostensible care of two married sisters.

Many Rivals

She was living with one of them, at the time she met Molineux, in an over-furnished, over-elaborate apartment on the West Side.

Although her parents left her no money, she subsisted well, mainly on the bounty of her brothers and sisters. She had a job, singing in the choir of a Brooklyn church which paid her ten dollars a week.

She was quiet and modest and her shy little manners of speech made her known and loved by the church members. She dressed quietly on Sundays and thanked the Sunday school superintendent for a modest bouquet of flowers and for lemonade which was tendered her at the simple Sunday school picnics.

During the days when Molineux pressed his suit, Blanche was most charming. He was not a jealous admirer, for he presented many of

his friends, including Barnet, who also became infatuated.

The number of rivals swelled and swelled.

"Was Barnet in love with Miss Cheeseborough?" Molineux was asked later and he replied that naturally he did not know what was in the other's mind.

"I can hardly blame him if he admired her," Molineux added. "Every one did," he explained.

Mercury Poison

Molineux proposed to Miss Cheeseborough on Thanksgiving Day and while she did not immediately accept him, she did so later. Barnet, fluttering about, did not, as far as the evidence went, propose at all.

The relations between the two men were markedly cordial — there was never, apparently, any break between them.

But something transpired to keep Blanche from receiving the attentions of Barnet after June, 1898, although she corresponded with him. Nobody seemed to discover just what brought this about—certainly not Barnet's lack of interest.

And it could not have been Molineux's wish, for after his engagement to Miss Cheeseborough he asked Barnet to take her to the Knickerbocker Club amateur circus performance, where he himself did not care to appear.

In October of that year Barnet was taken ill at the club. Nothing very much, just a headache, and a sore throat. Nevertheless he thought it advisable to call in a doctor.

Dr. Henry Douglass, who lived near the club, came at his request, examined him, found little trouble, and at length took a throat culture which he sent to be examined for possible diphtheria germs.

These germs were lacking, however, and the case at length set down to false diphtheria for which Barnet was duly treated.

Nevertheless his malady did not respond to the care and the doctor finally thought that he detected slight symptoms of mercury poisoning.

Then he saw some Kutnow powders on the desk.

There is calomel in Kutnow powders and for awhile the doctor decided that there was too much mercury present in the calomel and sent the box out to be analyzed.

Back came the report in a hurry—the mercury was there all right, not in the form of calomel, but in the deadlier form of cyanide of mercury! The powders were, in fact, a large proportion of the poison!

"Where did you get the powders?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, they are samples," replied Barnet. "They came to me in the mail."

Quite naturally he took no more of the powders. He seemed to be recovering slightly, then relapsed and by the end of the week he was dead.

The Wedding

Now Barnet had moved about, upstairs and down, during his convalescence and the death certificate was, therefore, filled in to the effect that he had died of heart failure, from too great exertion during the period following the attack of false diphtheria.

He was buried at Greenwood, and a large throng of friends followed him to his grave.

Every one remarked that they did not see Roland Molineux at the services or the cemetery. They wondered at this for the two were the best of friends apparently and the friendly rivalry which had existed between them would, they believed, only make Molineux the more anxious to observe social amenities.

It became evident that he was doing just that.

"I wasn't invited to the funeral," he said when asked why he had not attended. "I have always considered it

the correct procedure to fail to appear in a case like that!"

But he added that he had inquired several times for Barnet when he heard that he was ill, that Miss Cheesborough had, at his suggestion, sent flowers and written a note.

They had both neglected to call because they feared the false diphtheria, particularly at the time of their approaching wedding, when illness would have delayed the ceremony.

For they were planning to be married. And in less than three weeks after Barnet's death the ceremony was held at the Waldorf, where the couple remained for a honeymoon, after which they took rooms at a fashionable boarding house on West End Avenue.

A Christmas Present

Molineux kept the rooms at the factory, where he studied, and retained the young woman, Mamie Melando, to keep the place in order—two facts which had much bearing on the case when it later came to court.

From here let us jump to Christmas week, and the morning before the holiday.

Cornish, still living at his aunt's, left for the club earlier than usual, for there was much to do in connection with the Christmas affairs at the club.

As he came bustling into his office he saw on the desk a large lot of mail—and a square, small box wrapped in ordinary wrapping paper.

"A Christmas gift, by Jove," was his ejaculation, sweeping the letters aside and examining the parcel with unusual interest.

The address was in an unknown hand and omitted the name and address of the sender—such packages usually carried them. Scenting a mystery, he tore off the wrapper.

It was pleasant to receive an unexpected gift.

"Perhaps it is a joke," suggested his assistant unfeelingly.

"Ah, perhaps it is a lady," some one

else remarked, and with this agreeable idea in view the package was opened to view.

It was a blue box from Tiffany's. Within the box lay silken tissue, swathing a delicate silver bottle holder of charming design and embracing a blue bottle of bromo seltzer!

Clearly a joke, and a shout went up at the expense of the director. But Cornish was a little puzzled. For the joke was lacking. He had never taken a dose of bromo seltzer in his life. This "natural enough pleasantry at Christmas," to quote the district attorney, in the case had little point.

But the holder was fine, so Cornish left the present in plain view on his desk and showed it to every one who came in.

By noon it was quite the thing to kid Cornish about the Christmas gift sent him by a facetious lady; one or two late risers sent to inquire for a dose of bromo seltzer; and one of these, Harry King, was given the bottle and told to go as far as he liked.

A Dinner Party

Harry King's guardian angel was busy that morning. King took the bottle and the tumbler to the water cooler. There was no water. And, grumbling at the lax ways into which servants had fallen these days, he set the bottle back on the desk and went elsewhere for his dose.

Two days later, when every one had admired the gift, Cornish took it home, the bromo seltzer bottle still intact.

At home, of course, both women admired the little holder. Mrs. Rodgers said that it was the same design as the silver on her dresser, and Cornish promptly handed it to her, with the remark that she might set it with the rest.

"Only I'll keep the bromo for my own use," he laughed.

Two days later, as he frequently did to lighten the work for Mrs. Adams, he invited the family to dine with him at

a restaurant. The party was a gay affair and they returned home in high spirits. Every one enjoyed it, except, perhaps, Mrs. Adams, for the rich food made her ill, and she went promptly to bed.

The next morning Cornish rose and, as was his custom, went to the rear door of the apartment for his newspaper. He found Mrs. Adams bending over the stove in the kitchen preparing breakfast, with a cloth tied about her head.

"Still ill?" he paused to ask sympathetically, and she nodded. "That's a shame."

The Bromo Seltzer

"Just a headache. I am getting too old for rich food and late hours."

He laughed this away, and after asking if he could be of aid to her, went back to his room to read until summoned for breakfast.

Presently Mrs. Rodgers interrupted him by softly tapping on the door.

"Mother has a very bad headache," she explained. "I believe that a dose of the bromo seltzer might help her. Isn't that what they take for dissipation?"

Mrs. Adams, who had followed her in, laughed at this. Cornish handed them the bottle and they disappeared.

Two minutes later they were back again, they could not open the bottle, they said, and stood by with water and a spoon while Cornish turned the trick.

"Ugh, how sour it tastes," said Mrs. Adams, making a wry face as she downed it.

This interested Cornish. He had seen men take similar doses without wry faces, and decided to try one for himself. But he mixed for his own consumption a smaller doze. Hardly had he swallowed it when he began to feel dizzy and queer, and made his way to the chair by the window.

At that moment there was a cry from the dining room, whither Mrs. Adams

had retreated; there were a thud and a scream from Mrs. Rodgers.

"Come quick, mother has fainted!" she called.

Cornish, ill himself, staggered to the other room, and, athlete though he was, was unable by this time to find strength to lift the woman from the floor, where she lay white and drawn in suffering.

"I am ill, too, terribly ill," he gasped. "What do you suppose was in that bottle? Bromo seltzer could never act like that!"

"Go down to the drug store and find out what to do about it, quick," urged Mrs. Rodgers, wringing her hands. "If it is poison they will know what to do."

At the drug store on the corner they could give only this information: It was a poison, all right, *which* poison they did not know; they could not, consequently, give him the proper antidote.

"But there is a woman dying upstairs!" Cornish groaned.

Cornish Absolved

"Then fetch a doctor," advised the druggist, and he sent a boy out, calling others on the telephone.

At least half a dozen physicians got word to rush to the Adams flat—the first to arrive, half an hour later, found Cornish comfortable and Mrs. Adams dead.

Now neither this doctor nor Cornish reported the matter to the police. Plainly, they felt it was a case of poisoning with intent to kill Cornish. Mrs. Adams had merely intervened between the poisoner and his intended victim.

When he was able, which was shortly, Cornish hastened to the district attorney's office, where he had a friend, and told them the story, which he later referred to as "trouble up at the flat."

Quite naturally it perturbed him deeply to discover that he had an enemy who would resort to extreme measures. With the enemy at large it might

easily happen again—with no intervention from Providence in the shape of kind old ladies who never did any one any harm.

The investigation was placed in the hands of George McCluskey, captain of the detectives, who at once absolved Cornish of any intention to kill his aunt by this subtle means.

The relations existing between Cornish and Mrs. Adams were friendly in the extreme. He would have gained nothing by getting her out of the way.

The Holder Traced

The husband of Mrs. Rodgers was then considered a possibility, as was the wife of Cornish, both divorced; but these two people were absolved upon the most trifling investigation.

Then detectives decided that the deed had been done by a woman in revenge. For some time they concentrated in finding this woman. She remained unfound. Gradually they relinquished the idea—and began to look about more generally for some one who might have hated Cornish.

The investigation here proved more fruitful, for the trainer had always been a man of warm friendships and bitter enmities. But they could settle on no definite person among them.

In the matter of clews they had, of course, several on hand. There was, first of all, the blue box from Tiffany's. Just a box—such as was sent out of the shop by the hundreds, and which could not possibly aid in tracking their man.

The silver bottle holder within, however, proved more interesting. It had not been purchased at Tiffany's at all, but belonged to a lot made by a firm called F. A. Lebkeneker & Co., manufacturing jewelers of Newark.

As luck would have it, there had been but twenty-three of these holders made—and only one had been sold in New York. This was immediately traced to a source which could be none other than innocent.

On the holder in question a reporter discovered a mark 814. This immediately identified it as one sold to the retail firm of Hartdegan & Co., also of Newark.

The article, Hartdegan & Co. told the men, was not a bottle holder at all, but was designed to carry toothpicks, or suggested itself possibly as a candlestick; the idea of the bottle originated with the purchaser.

The bookkeeper of the shop, Miss Emma Miller, had been impressed into sales service the few days before Christmas, and she recalled selling this particular bottle—to a gentleman of about thirty-five or forty, harsh voice, pleasing manner, reddish Vandyke beard, rather anxious to make quick work of the purchase. He was, she recalled, about five feet eight in height, well bred and well born.

Detectives decided that the purchaser was some one who normally divided his time between Newark and New York—assuming, of course, that the purchaser and the sender were the same person, since the trinket had been bought in one place and mailed in the other at an hour when a commuter would logically return.

A Rare Poison

So far, so good. Then they turned to the bromo seltzer to see what clew this might present. They found, instead of anything to aid them, that bottles like this were sold by the hundreds and thousands all over the country each year. Then some one brought in an important finding; this bottle, though it closely resembled one, was not an original bromo-seltzer container at all, but a bottle used for cyanide of mercury.

"If it had been a bromo bottle," a druggist told them, "the trade-mark would have been blown into the glass."

Then they tried to discover the source of the cyanide of mercury. Here they had a difficult time of it, for they found that the drug was so rare

that druggists of wide experience could live out a lifetime without laying eyes upon it. Yet, once known, it was one of the easiest substances in the world to detect.

It had been discovered by a druggist named Scheele, who had come across the drug accidentally while concocting a certain color later named Prussian blue in his color laboratory. It was used in chemical and analytical laboratories, and up to that time there had been only three reported cases of poisoning by it in the entire world.

The Red Beard

Power and Wightman, called by the district attorneys "the princes of manufacturers of chemicals," who made more, probably, than any one else in the entire country, had sold but thirty ounces of cyanide in the whole year, and this in thirty one-ounce bottles.

The bottle sent to Cornish was one of the thirty bottles sold by this firm. Ten of the thirty had been sold in Newark, the wholesalers retaining six of them, the other four traced to innocuous sources, such as the laboratory of the high school. Then the wholesalers recalled selling a loose ounce over the counter for cash.

This complicated matters somewhat, and they were further involved by the professor of chemistry at the high school, who rushed into the district attorney's office to state that, after all, he had not purchased his cyanide from Power and Wightman, and that therefore two bottles were still unaccounted for by the police.

Sixty thousand orders in the files were painstakingly gone over, but the two missing bottles never were traced.

While this was going on a handwriting expert W. J. Kinsley, who had been studying the address on the poison package, reported that he believed it to have been written by a man between the ages of twenty-five and forty—a person who wrote much, probably a business man.

To whose advantage was it to have killed Cornish?

No one could be found who would have profited by the death of the trainer, but a search disclosed that he had many enemies who might have been glad to play a practical joke.

There was named a man with a continued and deep hatred of Cornish. This was Molineux. He was between twenty-five and forty. He was a business man who wrote much, and the description given by the girl in Hartdegan's who sold the silver bottle holder seemed to fit him. True, he had not a red beard, but he might easily have worn a false one. And while his voice was not harsh, that could easily have been assumed.

Then an enterprising detective found a wigmaker who stated that on the day of the purchase of the bottle holder a tall, well-dressed man had come into his shop to hire a wig and beard "with a natural look," and had paid eight dollars and seventy-five cents for the privilege of using one overnight.

An Easy Process

Molineux was a color maker—like Scheele, the discoverer. He too might have concocted the drug right in his laboratory, and none the wiser, thought the police.

Then a friend of Cornish came forward to state that he, as a chemist, could easily make this cyanide of mercury, difficult in itself to procure, from two easily and innocently obtained materials. He could make it, he said, by boiling Prussian blue with yellow oxide of mercury, red oxide of mercury, or queen's yellow. It was simple enough—boil the two and filter the compound when crystals were formed.

There were ominous mutterings among the detectives and supporters of Cornish. Then a certain New York paper came boldly out with the statement that the police were—or should be—looking for Molineux.

A friend of the family chanced to read the head at five in the morning, and hurried to the Molineux house, where he rang the bell loudly and flapped the paper in the sleepy general's face.

They woke Roland, and after a consultation hurried straight to the home of McCluskey, the detective in charge.

"I understand that you are looking for me," Molineux, debonair and smiling, remarked to the burly detective.

McCluskey patted him on the back and told him not to be silly; to go his way; that if he had been wanted, they would have come after him.

Two Identifications

"You are as free as air," McCluskey said.

Molineux went his way—straight to the offices of his friend, Bartow S. Weeks, who was an attorney.

Though all his friends pooh-poohed the idea of involving Molineux, the family felt their position keenly—all except Roland. Debonair, smiling, cane on arm, he visited the offices of the police in Newark and told them that they could find him at any time at his offices.

Then he and Weeks went to Hartdegan & Co. to see Miss Miller.

She failed to identify Molineux as her customer, even making allowances for the red beard. The story of the wigmaker was laughed out of the press—for he could not describe the man who hired the wig twice in the same manner. Molineux went smiling on his way.

But Weeks got on the job and hired D. N. Carvalho, a handwriting expert often utilized by the police, to clear up the mystery of the poison package address.

Kinsley, who had been at work on it since the third day after the murder, announced no progress in the matter. Carvalho was silent. And the investigation chased its tail in the sun.

Four weeks passed, and then there

came a bolt out of the blue. Two letter box men got into the affair and gave important information.

In those days branch post offices were rare and stationers made an excellent income by receiving mail for those who preferred not to use their own addresses, much in the same manner that general deliveries are used to-day. Ladies who wished to carry on clandestine correspondence; men who engaged in dubious business projects found them convenient. And letter box men asked no questions and carried no tales.

But, they explained, when the police were concerned they would not keep silent. The picture published in the press as the suspect in the Adams murder closely resembled a man who had come to their shops and ordered mail boxes, under the significant names of H. Cornish and H. C. Barnet!

They were quite unshaken in their insistence that the man had been Molineux. Nicholas Heckman, 242 W. Forty-Second Street, had read, he said, of Barnet's death in the paper, nevertheless the gentleman, he could not help but observe, had come in regularly for his mail.

The Blue Paper

He could not help noticing that it was composed mainly of communications from patent medicine firms.

Morris Koch, letter box man at 1260 Broadway, stated that his experience duplicated that of Heckman.

The Studio Publishing Company of the same address presented a letter signed "Roland B. Molineux," asking for a sample copy of their paper—in which there had appeared an advertisement of Koch's letter box business. And this letter was written on egg blue paper with three intertwined crescents, paper which appeared later in the files of a certain patent medicine firm signed "H. Cornish." It appeared a third time in the files of a doctor's office on Columbus Avenue signed "Roland B.

Molineux," and giving the Newark address.

The paper was traced from the maker, Whiting and Company, to several shops in Newark and New York. Mamie Melando, who cared for Molineux's rooms at the factory, swore that this paper had been among Molineux's effects—and based her statement on the fact that it had pleased her so much that she occasionally pilfered some.

Friends of Molineux remarked that Miss Melando had ample opportunity to place this egg blue paper in Molineux's desk at some outside instigation. Or that Miss Melando was plainly talking through her hat.

Molineux Denies All

Early in February the district attorney's office announced that by right of a recently established decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, they would take the matter out of the detectives' hands and that henceforth all investigation would emanate from that office.

The first thing they did was to order a coroner's inquest. And since the letter box men had added Barnet's name to the mystery and Dr. Douglass came forward and told all he knew about the Kutnow powders and the cyanide of mercury, the district attorney ordered Barnet's body exhumed. The findings there added to the general excitement. Enough poison was discovered to have killed half a dozen men.

In the time which intervened between the calling of the inquest and its occurrence, rumors that Cornish had openly accused Molineux gained credence and he was invited to make these accusations officially at the inquest.

Instead he denied ever having made them at all.

"Don't you recall saying that Molineux was the only man who could possibly have done it, accusing him?" he was asked.

"I do not accuse Mr. Molineux. Anything I may have said to McCluskey was by way of suggestion and not meant to be a charge."

Molineux lost none of his calmness during this proceeding. He conducted himself with such dignity and restraint that he won sympathy and created an immediate and excellent impression. Impassive and unshaken, he told frankly of the differences with Cornish during the last few years of his connection with the Knickerbocker Club.

He said that he and Barnet were always friendly, that he had not called on the sick man during his last illness because of the approaching wedding—quite naturally he would not wish to get diphtheria.

He denied ever having egg blue paper. He denied the mail boxes, he denied writing to patent medicine firms for remedies, this in face of the fact that the physical description—i.e., height, weight, and other characteristics—fitted him to the last inch.

Mrs. Molineux Testifies

When asked if he knew anything about cyanide of mercury he said that he had not heard of it, yet with his wide knowledge of poisons this seemed surprising.

Mrs. Molineux was also a witness at the inquest and won much admiration for her attitude. She was beautiful, unmoved, inscrutable. She told of her acquaintance with Barnet—for this angle of the matter seemed to have much weight—"the same mind conceived the idea of sending both poisons," was McCluskey's verdict.

She said that she had written to him at Molineux's suggestion and when the letter was read in court she showed no discomposure.

"I was distressed," the letter ran, written less than a month before the date of her wedding, "to hear of your illness. I arrived home on Saturday. I am so exceedingly sorry to know that you are indisposed. Won't you let me

know when you are able to be about? I want so much to see you. Is it that you do not believe me? If you would but let me prove to you my sincerity! Don't be cross with me any more. And accept, I pray you, my very best wishes.—Yours, BLANCHE."

"Why," asked the district attorney, "did you ask him not to be cross with you?"

"That was merely a matter of form," Mrs. Molineux answered calmly. She was cool, serene, unruffled.

"Was Barnet in love with Mrs. Molineux?" they thundered at Molineux next, and he replied:

What Motive?

"I am sure that I do not know his mind toward her, but I can hardly blame him if he admired her."

"Was she in love with Barnet?"

"Permit me," remarked Molineux smoothly, "to point to the fact that she married me."

Molineux's friends were indignant when they realized that he was placed in a position where accusation against him might at any time become official.

They insisted that while he had, unquestionably, made a study of poisons, he was not unique in this respect; that he would hardly stoop to strike an enemy under cover of darkness, that a poisoner was the lowest form of murderer, and that Molineux, with murder in his heart would be far more apt to settle things with his fists. But why should Molineux wish to strike at Cornish? Their paths had not crossed for a year and the differences were by that time forgotten on both sides.

What gain was there to be had from Cornish's death?

The statement from Frederick Stearns of Detroit, who said that he had received a letter signed with Cornish's name asking for news of a certain Harpster, which was not, he knew, written in Cornish's hand, had much weight when it was proved to be writ-

ten on egg blue paper topped by three interlaced crescents.

Cornish swore that only two people knew that Harpster had ever worked for Stearns, himself and Molineux.

Molineux was put on the stand and given a chance to swear that he had not been aware of Harpster's connection with the Stearns Company in Detroit and he failed to take oath to that effect, saying that while he did not recall hearing it, he "might have known it."

Then Cornish invited himself once more on the stand. He said that he could prove that Molineux had lied under oath when he said that he and Barnet were friendly and cited an instance or two to confirm his point.

"One day," Cornish related, "I saw Barnet out of the club on his way to a yachting trip. He seemed anxious to go, but presently he was back again, bag and baggage.

"I asked him why he had changed his plans, and he said that he could not go aboard as Molineux was there. Does that look as if they were the best of friends?"

The Verdict

The worst blow to Molineux, however, was the action of Heckman, who took the stand and swore that Molineux had hired a box from him. Only then did the accused man lose his calm.

He sprang to his feet shouting.

"I never saw Heckman in New York before to-day," he insisted; "I only saw him in Newark when some one brought him to my office to identify me. He didn't know me then. Why should he suddenly decide to know me now?"

Things looked blacker and blacker for Molineux. Seven handwriting experts took the stand and gave as their opinion the belief that the same hand had written the address on the poison package as had written the admitted Molineux writing. They swore, too, that he had declined to write certain

given sentences in vertical writing when they requested that he do so.

His own handwriting experts said nothing to remove the impression created by those who spoke for the State. Colonel Gardiner from the district attorney's office spent two hours summing up the evidence. The jury left the room and in another two hours brought back their verdict.

"We find," said the coroner's jury, "that Katherine Adams came to her death on December 28, 1898, at 61 West Eighty-Sixth Street by cyanide of mercury, a poison administered by Harry S. Cornish, to whom said poison was sent through the mails in a bottle of bromo seltzer by Roland B. Molineux."

The Writing Experts

His friends were in despair when they heard the action of the coroner's jury. They rallied round the general who threw his entire fortune into the defense of his son.

It was nearly a year before the case came to trial. During this time his friends proved themselves friends indeed by their attitude, his lawyers worked indefatigably to clear up the matter of the address on the poison package.

They made fierce assaults upon the proceedings of the prosecution, and finally succeeded in having one indictment thrown out, that of including in the affair the matter of the Barnet mystery. Then another grand jury from an up-State Supreme Court refused to indict at all and dismissed the indictment on grounds of faulty procedure.

Molineux was free — but was promptly rearrested while leaving the courthouse on a charge of assault filed by Cornish. In July he was again indicted and the case went to trial.

General Molineux sat beside his son, anxious, weary, loyal; Mrs. Molineux, too, sat at her husband's side, smiling, self-contained, non-committal.

The trial, which was notable for its

great length and unprecedented expensiveness, opened by formally establishing the death of Mrs. Adams. Then the handwriting experts took the stand and held it for nearly a week at a cost to the State of thirty thousand dollars.

They talked about pen habits and showed the court that every writer has them and that when any one wishes to disguise his hand, the thing to do, obviously enough, is to omit the characteristics which are his habitually. This was why the address on the poison package looked nothing like the admitted writing of Molineux's—on the face of it, and why, to an expert, they looked very much alike indeed.

They talked of size, shape, spacing, general proportion, shade and speed. They repeated and upheld each other, and suggested that had Molineux not been fundamentally a courteous gentleman, that, after all, he might have got away with it—they all had tripped him up on the words "please" and "oblige."

"Only one man in a million, in my opinion," said Tyrell, Kinsley's assistant, "could have written the word oblige in just that way, and in my opinion that man is Molineux."

The "A. B. Case"

Experts for the defense made the State's experts admit that there were differences in the writing in question and in the admitted handwriting.

"How do you account for the breaks which appear in the admitted handwriting and do not occur in the writing on the package?" asked Carvalho, for the defense.

"In my opinion the defendant was coached when he wrote the admitted handwriting," replied Tyrell coolly and gazing steadfastly at Carvalho and his assistants.

Cornish could not have written the address on the package, the State's experts said, and proceeded to show why to the tune of several thousand dollars.

The Barnet angle of the affair had

been ruled out, nevertheless the State found occasion to drag it in by the heels on every occasion. The defense naturally objected, the prosecution apologized for bad technique and promised to be good in the future.

But how that case came cropping up, and when Recorder Goff insisted that they stop referring to it, the State ingenuously suggested calling it the A. B. case instead of calling it by name.

Now, as it happened, the doctor who had rushed to the aid of Mrs. Adams had been the assistant of Dr. Douglass, who attended Barnet, and, accordingly, he was at liberty to refer to any similar case in his past experience.

Sing Sing

"Can't you say all there is to say about it and then stop?" asked the Recorder in despair, when he had expostulated half a dozen times.

"I apologize," said Osborne, the assistant district attorney, "but I want to give the jury the benefit of the evidence of one of the best analytical chemists in the country."

The attorneys for Molineux attacked the handwriting experts and insisted that they had failed to show that the defendant had written the poison package address; they insisted that the prosecution had failed to show any connection between the letter boxes and the case, and had utterly failed to show any motive for attempting to take the life of Cornish, which was obviously the idea behind the poison package.

"There is the motive, gentlemen!" the prosecution kindly explained to the jury, and pointed to Mrs. Molineux. But even then it failed to make the connection between the lady and Cornish at all clear.

But the testimony from Stearns of Detroit, the matter of the egg blue paper had its effect. There was wide variance of opinion as to what the verdict would be.

As many were amazed and stunned to hear that the jury, after deliberat-

ing eight hours, had found him guilty as were prepared for that word.

Molineux, guilty of murder in the first degree, was sentenced to the chair.

"I am not afraid, because I am not guilty," he said when he heard it, but his face was ashen.

He went to Sing Sing's death house at once.

Now in those days the State did not give a man warning as to the time of his execution. Every man there might expect to be taken at any time. Every step along the corridor brought a chill to every man's heart. He might be the next. The time might be now! It must have been a rather terrible period.

Molineux read a great deal, and while he declined to join in the sociable games of checkers which the other condemned men played by calling their moves across the tiers or to join in conversation, he was liked, even admired, by those around him.

The Second Trial

"He seems a very affable gentleman," the diary of one of these men set forth, "but finds more pleasure in his own society than in that of other people. I don't think that this is because he is haughty, in any way, but because his mind is more highly cultivated than most murderers. He likes to do gymnastics in his cell."

After Molineux's incarceration the fight for the new trial began. General Molineux had spent his fortune—more than one hundred thousand dollars—but friends eagerly made up the rest of the huge sum required.

And then the Court of Appeals brought a unanimous decision and set aside the verdict on the ground that the Barnet case had been improperly introduced in the first trial.

This meant that Molineux was automatically released from Sing Sing and taken to the Tombs. He declined to go out on bail.

"Nothing but acquittal will satisfy

me now," he said. "I would rather remain in my cell than walk out with suspicion still against me."

His family furnished his cell in the Tombs with his own bed, chairs, lamps, tables, books. It was cozy and home-like.

The second trial was shorter, but no less exciting than the first. Molineux, who did not go on the stand during the first trial, was now a marvel of alertness and skill at parrying the district attorney's gibes.

The State tried to establish a sort of Jekyll and Hyde existence on the part of Molineux. They endowed him, in fact, with three personalities, one which would undoubtedly be innocent; the second which would have wished to kill Cornish; and the third which probably, though they did not say so, would have killed Barnet for attention to the young lady who later became his wife.

The handwriting experts were given little or no consideration, though whether in the interests of justice or economy is not known.

Molineux's defense was an alibi—he attempted to prove that he had been at Columbia University at the precise hour when the package was mailed at the post office many miles down town.

Evidently he proved it. For the jury went out November 4, 1902, and deliberated thirteen minutes, bringing back a unanimous verdict of not guilty.

Roland B. Molineux, after nearly four years of torture, was free.

It was shortly after the acquittal that his wife, who had been loyal to him throughout, went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and obtained a divorce. She later married W. Scott, an attorney of Sioux Falls.

For the first time in years he could at last feel out of the limelight. His photographs had been broadcast throughout the country, and, from a feeling of sensitiveness, he shrank from exposing himself to public view. He grew a beard and otherwise changed his appearance.

At once he began a campaign for the betterment of prison conditions. He devoted much time to reading and to writing sketches of prison life.

His father tried to awaken his interest in his old work, for the war had depleted the resources of the color business and he felt that Roland might devise substitutions, but his interest in the old work flagged, and when, after repeated attempts, he failed to find the proper materials, he dropped the work.

He wrote a play on prison life called "The Man Inside," and, through an agent, sold it to Belasco. The play went indifferently, but Margaret Connelley, the young woman who arranged the sale, proved an interest of much importance, and in 1913, the first Mrs. Molineux having divorced him, he married her.

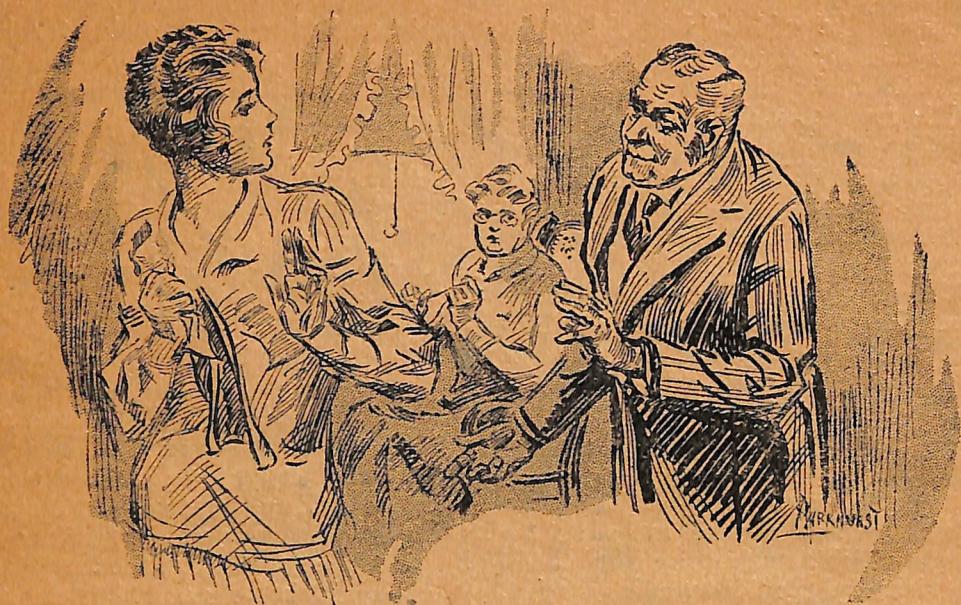
But even she failed to fully restore his peace of mind, although she devoted her life to trying. Born and reared in a sensitive fashion, Molineux could not accustom himself to the fate which had been his. The rough life in prison, the aspect of his father's lost fortunes in his behalf, worried him, and he became ill.

Daily he grew less cheerful, and in spite of all that his father and his wife could do, gradually developed melancholia. Laughing and crying, now grave now gay, he became a pitiful figure indeed to those who loved him. Always interested in athletics, they persuaded him to go to Mac Levy's Farm on Long Island for a rest.

Levy had been a good friend to him and was much liked by Molineux. But one day he attacked the trainer so savagely that it was thought unsafe to leave him without restraint. He attacked his wife and later his father, and in September, 1914, he was forcibly taken to an insane asylum.

"We can only stand by our boy and hope on," his father declared.

But he never recovered from his malady. In November, 1917, he died at a State hospital for the insane.



"What do you want?" she spat at him, her eyes flashing fire. "Haven't I done enough?"

The Murder at Avalon Arms

Puzzling Out the Slain Gambler's Last Words, Chief MacCray Discovers the First Clew to the Master Mind Behind the Murder Plot

By Owen Fox Jerome

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

HARRY LETHROP, son of an eminent Chicago jurist, rescued a beautiful girl from the attack of a thief.

The incident was, apparently, the first step in a frame-up. Young Lethrop was drawn into an elaborate trap and accused of the murder of a Chicago gambler, Francis Keene. Evidence against him was strong.

The girl, Christine Vincennes, disappeared. Judge Lethrop, of the State Supreme Court, appealed to the police

chief for aid in establishing his son's innocence. Chief Quentin summoned Chief of Detectives MacCray.

In a few short hours, MacCray, dynamic sleuth, learned several important things. He learned that Keene, gasping out his life's breath, had murmured an unintelligible sentence and the name Elihu.

He learned that Judge Lethrop was the jurist selected to pass on the appeal of a Joseph Crawley from conviction for the murder of his wife, and he

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for September 29

discovered similarities between the two murders. Mrs. Crawley had also uttered the name Elihu.

Joseph Crawley was convicted on the evidence of his finger-prints on the murder pistol. Harry Lethrop's finger-prints were found on the Keene murder gun. MacCray was convinced Lethrop was framed. Could Crawley have been framed too? While he was wondering, Judge Lethrop received a message which read:

"I have not forgotten my promise.
CARLOS FERNANDEZ."

The judge was bewildered. He had never heard of the man.

And then another mysterious name entered the case—John E. Duke.

John Duke, MacCray later discovered, had paid the expenses of Crawley's trial; Duke also had employed Keene to run his gambling den. And the weapon which had killed Keene and had been stolen from Meadow's department store with Harry Lethrop's finger-prints on it, was registered in Duke's name.

MacCray subjected Crawley, who was in prison awaiting execution, to an odd third degree, and the prisoner, in a hypnotic state, made wild statements about a strange portrait in the Duke residence.

Harry Lethrop, free on bail, picked up the trail of the chauffeur who had attacked Christine Vincennes, and discovered she was a prisoner in an apartment rented by a man named Carlotti. She dropped a note to him appealing for help.

CHAPTER XIV

The Kidnaper's Lair

THE red-haired clerk popped up from his chair behind his counter like a jack-in-the-box. At sight of Harry Lethrop his jaw slacked and his eyes bulged.

"My God!" he articulated. "You back again?"

"Who is manager of this house, and

where can I find him?" demanded Harry tersely.

The clerk considered.

"Why do you want to know?" he countered.

Harry had a secret suspicion that he was not going to like this clerk, but he could not afford to antagonize him, considering the plans he had made, so he replied very civilly.

"You have a notice outside that a janitor is wanted," he said. "I want to apply for that job. I must have it. I've got to have it!"

The clerk leaned far out over his counter and stared incredulously.

"Ha!" he snorted, mildly for him. "Ha! So you really would work for a living, eh? You don't look in hard shape. What's your game?"

"There isn't any game. I tell you I must get that job. Where can I find the proper person to apply to?"

"Right here," rejoined the clerk. "Mr. Starlatch is the manager and owner of this place. You can see him, if you are in earnest. Where are your references?"

"Do I have to have references to shovel coal?"

The clerk laughed loudly.

"Shovel coal? My boy, you don't know the first thing about the duties of a janitor, I see. A janitor, my lad," he went on, "must be horny-handed. Let's see your hands! I thought as much! Soft! Soft! Not only must his hands be hard—so must his heart.

"He must know how to swear. He must be hard so that he can demand—and collect. Shovel coal? My son, that is one of his minor duties. He must handle luggage, do odd carpenter work all over the building, be a handy man with plumber's wrenches, be a jack of all trades. In brief, the janitor of to-day is the czar of the apartment house. You wouldn't suit. Besides, we hired a janitor this morning."

"Are you really telling me the truth?" asked Harry. "Did you really hire a man for the job?"

The clerk shrugged.

"Ha!" he reflected. "Not the first time the truthfulness of Jack Durant has been questioned. Go ask Mr. Starlatch. First door to your right behind you. Knock before you enter."

Harry read nothing but truth in the impish blue eyes before him. He could not repress a slight groan of disappointment. He looked woebegone.

"Say, what's eating you, anyhow?" Durant demanded. "Are you on your uppers sure enough?"

"You don't have any idea," confided Harry desperately. "I—I just have to do something about this. It's—it's on account of a—girl."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Mr. Durant wisely, cocking his bristling head. "I see. I see. Oh, ha! Ha! Ha! Let me think! Let me think!"

Harry made no attempt to interrupt the process.

"I say, now," remarked Mr. Durant very suddenly. "You don't seem such a half bad sort after all. Tell me all about it. Maybe I can help you find a job somewhere."

"But I must have it here," groaned Harry.

"Here? What d'you mean?"

"My girl," explained Harry, playing on the chord of romance which seemed to have touched the red-haired clerk's heart. "She lives here. She isn't allowed to see me. I—I must be near her so I can—can arrange to elope with her. And I must keep everything secret."

"Ha!" snorted Mr. Durant. "I see it all now. Magazine peddling in order to visit sweetheart! Romance of youth! Love tryst thwarted by house clerk! Stark tragedy! Gloom! Janitor's job next best bet! Capital!"

Harry began recovering himself. He allowed the other to enlarge on the theme to his heart's content. It was not so far from the truth at that. While the delighted Mr. Durant ran riot, he considered the advisability of calling MacCray and raiding the Bon Ton.

But would such an act result in the rescue of Christine? Was she really here? It would never do to make a mistake and lose what little advantage he had gained thus far. He would, if he failed to find the girl, merely warn the criminals that the law was hot on their trail.

No, the idea which was formulating, thanks to Mr. Durant's assistance, was by far the best. He must somehow manage to get a job here and survey the situation carefully before he made any rash moves.

Money was no object. If nothing better offered, perhaps he could bribe Durant to let him take his job for a week or two. At least, he should be able to use the clerk as a source of information. But he had to make sure of the fellow, first.

"Ha!" chuckled Mr. Durant. "I'm going to help you. What's your name?"

Harry started. The first name which rose to his lips was his own, and that would never do. He cast wildly about for a suitable cognomen. The only name which suggested itself was the name MacCray had given him at the department store that morning.

"Jones," he said aloud. "Harry Jones. Call me Harry."

He had given his own Christian name purposely; he knew that he would not be caught napping by failing to respond to it. Otherwise, he was now a complete creation of Chief MacCray, name, identity, and physical characteristics. Harry Lethrop, the material witness in the Keene murder case, had dropped out of existence.

"All right, Harry. Listen to me. Mr. Starlatch spoke to me only this morning about hiring a night man. This is a new place, it ain't completely filled up yet, and he has to go easy on the expenses. I'm working for less than I'm worth right now. Ha! Never mind that. Anyway, we need a sort of combination night clerk and elevator man. If you'd work reasonably, I guess I could get you the job.

Would that do you any good—working here from six to six?"

"Would it? Just try me!" said Harry fervently.

"There wouldn't be much to do after ten o'clock. I figure you can make some plan to talk to your girl over the phone, or meet her in one of the corridors, or something. Say, do her folks know you?"

"Not by sight."

"That's fine. Wait here while I go talk to Mr. Starlatch."

"You were yelling for him awhile ago. What if—"

"He didn't come out of his office. Ha! You'll have to admit you were acting cuckoo. Being in love makes a fellow real batty, don't it?"

"It certainly does," agreed Harry fervently.

"I'll be right back," promised Durant, vaulting the counter. "If anybody comes in after their keys or their mail, ask them their name. You'll find a card hanging on the key rack with the names of the tenants and their apartments."

Willingly Harry accepted the task.

"Mum's the word," he cautioned his new friend. "This is strictly between us."

"You bet it is, kid. Leave it to me. Ha!"

Mr. Durant jerked himself through the door leading to the owner's office, and Harry immediately installed himself behind the counter. He wasted no time finding the indexed card and searching feverishly for a certain name.

His luck had been so phenomenal that he feared a sudden check. But no, there was the name he sought—Antonio Carlotti, Suite 307. He looked quickly at his sheet of paper. The name was the same.

A rapid buzzing caused him to start. He looked up and saw that the sound came from a small telephone switchboard at the end of the counter. He approached and glanced at it. It was the type of board found in office build-

ings and apartment houses, a board with ten sets of jacks and some forty numbers on it. There were two trunk lines, their telephone numbers just above them, which entered the board in the lower right-hand corner. It was the light above one of these which was glowing, indicating a call from outside.

Harry hesitated an instant and then thrust one of the outer jacks into the hole, slipped the receiver over his head, pressed the proper key, and answered the call.

"Bon Ton Apartments," he said into the mouthpiece.

"Three hundred and seven," an energetic voice spoke crisply in his ear.

"I beg pardon?" answer Harry, nonplussed for the moment.

"Connect me with 307—Carlotti's apartment," the voice crackled impatiently.

Harry was electrified. For an instant his fingers were all thumbs. At last he managed to plug the inner jack of the proper pair into the hole marked "307" and then pressed the inner key on the board to ring the apartment. Almost instantly a man's voice answered the call. Shamelessly Harry left his key open and listened in.

"Hello!"

"Carlotti?"

"Yas."

"Neal there?"

"No, sir. He justa lef'."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Sure. He was here coupla hour, but all gone now."

"He is on his way here," decided the gentleman of the crisp voice. "All right, never mind."

"Wassa mat?" demanded Carlotti, his accent thickening in excitement.

"Nothing," replied the other curtly. "Don't flare up. Everything all right there?"

"Oh, sure, yas, sir."

"Gentle treatment, mind! You know me!"

"Oh, sure. You bet. Everything all wat you calla okayed."

"Good. It won't be long now. That will be all—no! If you see Neal before I do, tell him to keep an eye out for a tall, well-built fellow wearing glasses and a mustache. It is barely possible that he has been shadowed."

Signor Carlotti promptly erupted with a torrent of voluble Italian, while Harry nearly dropped the operator's ear phones from his head in his astonishment.

"*Silenzio, pazzo!*" cut in the other sharply. "*Importa poco.*"

"Ahhh, *signore!*" almost whimpered the melodious voice of Carlotti, and he was off again in a stream of fluent Italian.

The other man cut him off with a razor-edged voice. Thereafter followed what Harry took to be a series of commands and directions all in Italian which was too swift for him to follow. This ended abruptly with a sharp click which indicated that the caller had hung up his receiver.

Harry heard the worried Signor Carlotti sigh heavily as he hung up his own receiver.

The buzzer reawakened on the switchboard, and Harry jerked out the pair of plugs and removed his head phones just as Jack Durant returned with an individual in tow.

"Ha!" he ejaculated in surprise. "You can work a switchboard, Harry? Fine!"

"Yes," replied Harry as calmly as possible. "I'm familiar with small outfits like this."

"Incoming or outgoing call?"

"Incoming."

"No charge, then. This is Mr. Starlatch. Mr. Starlatch, Harry Jones."

Mr. Starlatch was a little man with a big mustache. He looked to Harry like a London cabby who had risen considerably above his station. His nose was bulbous and of a faintly suspicious hue. His speech was thick and mushy, as though his words found it difficult to escape through the hairy entanglement on his lips. Otherwise, he

appeared a quiet and harmless person.

"Mr. Jones, it is?" he managed to get out. "Durant has recommended you for this job as night man."

"I'm very grateful," replied Harry.

"I hadn't fully made up my mind that we can afford a night clerk," Mr. Starlatch mumbled away as distinctly as possible. "But since you are here, and recommended by Jack, why—I might start you at a small salary. It might not pay, you see."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll give you ten dollars a week and a room to sleep in. I'm sorry, but that's the very best. Maybe—if business justifies it—"

"That's all right," declared Harry quickly. "I'll take it, sir."

Mr. Starlatch looked a trifle put out, as though he resented this interruption.

"I usually demand references," Mr. Starlatch went on, parting his mustache dexterously. "But Jack has recommended you very highly. I guess—yes, I guess that will do. You can go to work to-night. Jack will start directing you now, if you're ready. Then you go out for supper and go to work when you come back. All right?"

"Perfectly. And thank you, sir."

"All right," responded Mr. Starlatch abstractedly, waving one hand as he wondered why he had not offered six dollars per week to this anxious worker. "Show him the basement room, Jack, for his sleeping quarters. Better have one of the maids see if the bed is made up."

The newly born Harry Jones now had a station in life. Moreover, he had a burning mission, and the enemy was already taking him into account. Quite a record for an eight-hour-old fledgling.

The next two days proved the busiest and most arduous Harry had ever experienced, not excepting even the day of the murder. For one thing, he was under a double strain which he

had not known before. He knew that the criminals were on the alert for him as Harry Jones, probably were seeking him hourly, and this was by no means less painful than to be held as a material witness by the law.

The second matter which almost carried him to the heights of frenzy was the little note appealing for help which he carried over his heart. It was from the one girl in the world he would gladly have sacrificed everything for, he was in the same building with her, he was planning and scheming to get in touch with her, and he had not so much as seen her at a distance. And she had no way of knowing whether or not her pitiful little S O S had reached a responsive station.

And with all this to beset him, he was busy learning the ways of a night clerk in an apartment house, learning to change his days into nights and his nights into days, watching out for the wary Neal, worrying about his father and MacCray, knowing that they would fear something had happened to him.

But he dared not try to communicate with either of them in any manner until he felt he could do so safely.

The afternoon that he took his new job he left the place about five o'clock. His first objective was a cheap clothing store which was not in the immediate neighborhood. He bought a ready made sack suit, two or three inexpensive shirts, ties, socks, undergarments, and a suit of pyjamas. Two or three other little items, and a straw suitcase to carry them in, completed his purchases. Farther down the street he bought a cheap cap. At the drug store where the taxi pirate had deserted him he found the necessary toilet articles to complete his kit.

Before he went on duty he retired to his room and changed his tailored suit for the inferior garment he had bought. His eyeglasses he also discarded, resolving to risk the upper part of his face in order to obliterate more perfectly the described shadower of Neal.

He was in a quandary as to how to dispose of his own clothes and the soft felt hat. He dared not give them away, nor yet sell them to any second-hand store for fear they might be traced. Finally he decided to parcel post them to himself at home. This he did the first thing the following morning. He put no return address on the bundle, and he dared not put in a message of any sort to his father for fear the package might fail to reach its destination, but he wrote his name and address in his natural hand and prayed that his father would observe and quiet his fears.

The first night on duty he was too busy to proceed with his effort to reach the imprisoned Christine. His duties were too new to him for him to know just how and when he could desert his post.

He confined his efforts to the first floor and basement and, after midnight, dozed intermittently until daylight.

Upon the return of Jack Durant, who did not live in the house, he attended to his mailing business, had breakfast at a delicatessen, and returned to chat with the alert Mr. Durant before thinking of going to bed.

From him he learned many things about the building, the floor plan, the description, names, and idiosyncrasies of the various tenants, and a great deal about Mr. Durant himself. He was still on guard, fearing even yet to take the obliging young fellow into his confidence. Finally he went to bed for several hours.

In the early afternoon he returned to the clerk's office. At Durant's suggestion he made a personal tour of the house in order to make sure of the plans. He located the Carlotti apartment without trouble on the third floor overlooking the street.

It was a four-room affair, bathroom, kitchen, and the two living rooms with disappearing closet beds. There was a tiny hallway just inside the corridor

door, which connected the two bedrooms.

He dared not tarry near the door with the number 307, much as he felt the urge to assault the barrier with his bare hands. Upon his return to the lobby of the house he was saved the trouble of approaching the matter of his affair by the blunt interest of Mr. Durant.

"Ha!" boomed the latter at sight of him. "Come behind the counter so we can talk. Well? What have you planned on doing? Which is your girl, anyhow? You haven't told me a damn thing."

Harry eyed his untried friend. Then he drew a deep breath, and plunged.

"Her name is Christine," he said soberly. "I don't think you have ever seen—"

"I know I haven't," butted in Mr. Durant promptly. "There ain't a Christine in the Bon Ton."

Harry smiled sadly.

"She is kept a prisoner by Antonio Carlotti," he explained.

Durant studied him anxiously. Then:

"Say!" he exclaimed. "You're clear off your nut. I've already told you about the Carlottis. They're ham actors out of work—just the pair of them—singers they think they are—I've heard 'em yodel. Ha! I doubt if they're man and wife. They ain't old enough to have a grown daughter. Why, Harry—"

"I didn't say she was their daughter. I merely said she is a prisoner here. And that is—"

"When did she arrive?"

"Tuesday."

"Ha! They must have smuggled her in at night. I can swear that no young woman was brought here while I was on the job."

"I don't know how it was done at all," replied Harry wearily. "But I know she is here, and I'm going to see her."

"Sure you ain't dreaming?"

"If I didn't think it would spoil everything, I'd break into that apartment right now," stated Harry violently.

"She's here," decided Mr. Durant wisely. "Easy, kid, easy! Ha! I'll help you. We've got to get both Carlotti and his wife away at the same time so you can see the girl alone. Ha! Let me think! Let me think!"

But all the thinking both of them could do yielded no results. Signor and Signorina Carlotti could not be pried from their apartment at the same time by any sort of subterfuge. And great care had to be exercised in order to keep from arousing their suspicions.

Jack Durant entered into the game with the greatest of zest. They tried everything except a fire alarm to get into the apartment quietly. The *signor* was called down to the desk on some business while the *signorina* was out shopping. He did not appear until the *signorina* had returned.

As a plumber Harry went up to fix the sink trap. He was not admitted. While the *signor* was out on business the *signorina* could not be beguiled to stick her nose out of Number 307.

Jack Durant borrowed a spyglass from a pawnshop—for a consideration, and spied on the third floor windows from the building across the street. And all to no avail.

A fake accident call, a fire alarm, a fake burglary, an impersonation over the phone of the mysterious leader—none of these drastic measures were tried because failure would result in swift and inevitable warning.

Thursday, Thursday night, and Friday morning passed without the slightest result having been obtained. Harry was nearly distracted.

"It's damn funny the girl don't set up a yowl of some sort," jerked out Durant in disgust. "I thought prisoners created disturbances. You don't suppose she's tied and gagged, do you?"

"I don't know," worried Harry.

"The man over the phone warned Cartotti about kind treatment."

"The man? You mean her father?"

"I don't know."

"You *don't* know?"

"No," blundered on Harry, so wrapped in his thoughts that he failed to note he was revealing some very puzzling information to Durant. "I've been thinking and thinking of all the voices I have heard in hopes that I would recognize it. I don't know whether it could be that of the beer keg chap's or not. If he would only come here himself! Now, if—"

"Say!" ejaculated Mr. Durant, thrusting his sharp face almost under Harry's nose. "What kind of a business is this? What the hell have you let me in for? What sort of a game am I sitting in on?"

Harry recalled himself with a jerk and drew back, staring at the shrewdly alert Durant in some fright. Then he recovered himself and smiled grimly. He was in for it now. He decided to make a job of it.

"A deeper game than you ever sat in before, Jack," he stated in flat, level tones. "A game with a wonderful girl as the stake and the gallows as the first booby prize. A game of crime, with murder as the first move."

"I've given too much away, but I was on the verge of trusting you to the limit, anyway. Listen! Do you know who I really am? I am the man who was arrested for the murder of Francis W. Keene. My real name is Harry Lethrop."

"Julius Cæsar!" gurgled Mr. Durant. "The Avalon Arms affair! And here you are at work in another apartment house before the first victim is in the ground. Holy Moses! Mother! Mother! Your little boy Jack's in one helluva jam."

"And he's going to be in a tighter one if he doesn't stick!" added Harry ominously. "My sweetheart was abducted—kidnaped—stolen from that Avalon Arms apartment at the same

time that murder was fixed on me. I've traced her here. I'll really do murder this time if anybody gets in my way before I rescue her!"

"By golly, I believe you!" said Mr. Durant.

"Do you want to hear my story and stick with me? Or shall we have it out between us right now before you can betray me?"

"I like good stories," replied Mr. Durant ingenuously. "And I very seldom betray a friend."

It took the rest of the afternoon to lay Harry's exact case before the solemnly judicious and thoroughly sobered Mr. Durant.

"Now," said the narrator desperately, "I'm getting wilder every minute. You've got that note in your hand. What would you do if you were me? We've tried everything except a police raid."

"You want my advice?" said Durant.

"I need it before I run amuck," declared the young lover earnestly.

"All right. Here it is!" snorted the other tersely. "To hell with the risk! Go see MacCray and get his advice before you bungle things. Don't start looking up your friends to reassure them about your safety—MacCray can do that. Just see him and spill your story. Get out now! I'll stick on your shift until you get back. Ha!"

And thus Chief MacCray learned of the one and only lucky break which chance handed him in the case of the Avalon Arms murder.

CHAPTER XV

Grady Blunders

THE new lodger at Mrs. Yeager's boarding house in Union Park Court aroused neither great interest nor comment. He was a quiet, almost abashed individual with rather large hands and feet—Mr. Hiram Burke from Boone Corners, Indiana, visiting the big city to see the sights.

perhaps accept a position in gents' burlining at Meadow's or Hubbs', and keep Chicago lead out of his system.

He was no trouble at all, he never pushed himself forward, he never usurped any old boarder's favorite chair or nook, he never elbowed himself a conspicuous amount of food and room at the table, he never raised a loud voice in argument or offensive opinion. He never made any noise, he never got in the way, and he made no overt moves.

At the same time he managed to become acquainted with every boarder in the house within forty-eight hours. In brief, he was a country cousin who knew his proper place and stayed in it. A refreshing novelty.

Nobody disliked him, and several of the elderly ladies were quite charmed by his naïve shyness. The very morning he arrived he won the sympathy of Miss Edwina Gilchrist. Mrs. Yeager had scarcely installed him in his room, giving him—during this process—the names of his immediate neighbors, the rates of the various rooms, the history of the chiffonier in his chamber, and a brief biographical sketch of herself, and had toddled away on her round of duties when he knocked timidly on Miss Gilchrist's door.

Miss Edwina was not the thin-nosed, close-mouthed type of New Englander. Instead, while her eyes and her tongue and her accent were sharp enough, she was a fleshy woman—as many victims of heart trouble are—with a countenance and mind pleasingly broad. She was small in stature, and a dainty lady despite her weight. She was possibly sixty years of age, and her unwrinkled cheeks were as soft as swan's-down.

She opened the door, her tatting still in one hand, and looked in surprise at the young man who clung, panting and gasping, to the casing.

"For pity's sake!" she exclaimed in her gentle voice. "What's the matter?"

"I—I am the new lodger in the next

room, ma'am," murmured Mr. Burke weakly. "I suffer with occasional heart spells. Will you be so good as to—to call a doctor for me?"

"You poor boy! Of course!"

She would have helped him to a chair, but he shook his head in polite refusal, clutched at his breast, and staggered back into his own chamber.

Thus it was that Dr. Fordyce added a second patient with angina pectoris to his list at Mrs. Yeager's establishment. Right speedily he relieved the suffering Mr. Burke of his attack without suspecting the depressant that gentleman had cautiously administered to himself just prior to the heart attack.

During this first and only visit, with the quiet Mr. Burke's adroit help, Dr. Fordyce also revealed the fact that Miss Edwina Gilchrist was his regular patient, that he was treating her for this same affliction, and that she had been coming along nicely of late—in fact, had not had an attack of any nature for more than two weeks.

For all of which Mr. Burke thanked him, paid his fee, dutifully promised to have the two prescriptions filled and to report to the doctor within the week, and promptly dismissed the worthy physician from his mind except as a possible witness on the stand.

With the exception of this sudden illness Mr. Burke created no disturbance whatever about the place. He slipped quietly into the life of the house like a pair of old carpet slippers. His heart attack won him instant sympathy and served as an admirable reason why he remained closely at home for the ensuing few days.

In fact, he stayed so close and saw so little of the city that it came as a complete surprise to Mrs. Yeager when he hesitantly informed her that he was expecting company Sunday and could he have dinner for three served in his room if he paid extra for it.

"Why, certainly, Mr. Burke. But, land, I didn't s'pose you knew anybody in Chicago outside of the house."

"It's my cousin Bert who lives in Chicago," he explained shyly. "He's bringing over a friend to meet me. It'll—it'll be all right if we have a game of dominoes in my room, won't it? We won't be noisy."

Mrs. Yeager could not refrain from giving him a gentle pat on the shoulder as she assured him he could do what he pleased as long as he did not annoy the other roomers.

Hence, Sunday morning, while the devout were at church, two gentlemen callers to see Mr. Hiram Burke were admitted to the house. There were no sharp eyes, if we except Lizzie the parlor maid and old man Saxle, the shoe salesman, who dozed over the papers in his favorite chair, to recognize the visitors as police officers pretending to be surface car conductors off duty.

It was all in the day's work to Mr. Grady, and he took things calmly as he asked for his cousin from Boone Corners. Sergeant Brill, however, felt as comfortable in this elegant old boarding house as a fish on ice. Nevertheless, orders were orders, and he waded into this business as stoically as he would have gone on duty at the Robey Street station. However, it proved to be less boring than they had anticipated.

Chief MacCray had said this was to be a social visit; evidently Burke had received instructions to make it so.

He greeted them cordially at the head of the stairs and ushered them into his private chamber immediately.

"Everything is very quiet here," he informed them. "And I'm the quietest chap in the house. My party—Miss Edwina Gilchrist—is reading her Bible in the next room. Her niece, Edna Boatwright, has gone to church with the landlady. I don't know of anything that is to prevent us from having a friendly afternoon together. I've ordered dinner to be sent up here for the three of us. Cigars and cigarettes on the table. Sunday papers if you

want to read. Dominoes and cards if you want to play."

"What the dickens are we here for?" inquired Grady, tossing his hat onto the bed and seating himself lazily.

Burke glanced at him in surprise and then shrugged.

"If you don't know," he replied, "I can't tell you. My orders are to entertain you two and still keep an eye on the old lady in yonder. I've made three peepholes for us through the wall—they're corked up now, but we can see and hear pretty well what goes on in the next room if we're close to the wall—five-inch walls they are, too."

"The holes are not as convenient as they might be, but I had to match the dark spots of the wall paper in that sitting room. It took me one whole day to make 'em. I only had half an hour in that room to mark 'em while the old lady was out in the park."

"I suppose we are to let events guide us," yawned Grady, lighting a cigarette.

"I suppose," agreed Burke. "I turned in a full report on my party the day after I was assigned to this case, and the chief said to stay here and carry on until further orders. Don't look so glum, sergeant. We have good meals here."

Brill grunted and opened the box of dominoes.

"No use just sitting around," he commented. "Come on, I'll play you two plainclothes cops for a penny a point. I might as well pass the time profitably."

"Bull from a harness bull," remarked Grady in blunt humor. "Pull up a chair, Burke, and we'll give this overfed flatfoot the works."

"Wait'll I open a window to let out the smoke. And you are both out of character," rejoined Burke. "While we would have to talk rather loud for our voices even to be heard out of this room, I suggest we carry out our parts—Cousin Bert, and *Mister Nickols*."

Presently they were engrossed in a

game of the ebony counters. The time slipped away as the play became more deeply interesting. The noon hour came, and the growing confusion and chatter downstairs, the noise of incoming diners, disturbed them not.

Then the odor of cooking smote their nostrils. It was mealtime. The opening and closing of the corridor door to the adjoining room aroused them.

Burke motioned his companions toward the dividing wall, and quickly removed the plugs from his peepholes. A thrillingly melodious voice fell on their ears.

"—lovely, Aunt Edwina. I wish you had felt strong enough to go. Dinner is about ready, dear. Are you hungry?"

Sergeant Brill stiffened all over. His shoes creaked as he glued his ear firmly against his side of the wall. Grady watched him curiously, all the while listening to the conversation.

"I'll eat a bit, my child," responded the voice of Miss Gilchrist.

"I'm glad," went on Edna Boatwright, seating herself before the dressing table to give a few unnecessary touches to her toilet. "I thought we might take the 'L' or a taxi down to Jackson Park this afternoon. The outing will do you worlds of good, and it's a perfectly gorgeous day."

Sergeant Brill was gurgling in his throat by now. His eyes were popping, and his usually red face was a solid brick color.

"That voice?" he gasped out in a painful whisper. "That voice!"

"Well? What about it?" hissed Grady at him tersely.

"That—that is the voice of the woman who called the station about the Keene murder!" was Brill's surprising answer. "I'd know it in a million! Who is that in the next room?"

Grady's big hand closed like a clamp about the excited sergeant's arm as Burke answered the query.

"That is Edna Boatwright," the lat-

ter said. "The private secretary of Judge Lethrop."

"Shut up, the pair of you!" hissed Grady savagely. "Shut up, and listen!"

"Why can't we go? It won't hurt you a bit," the young woman was saying in response to an obvious refusal on the part of her aunt.

"He called over the telephone while you were at church," replied Miss Gilchrist in sharp emphasis.

Edna Boatwright's hands flew to her lovely auburn hair, not so much to arrange its shimmering coils as to permit her forearms to hide her flushing face from the eyes of her aunt.

"Who? Mr. Warner?"

Miss Gilchrist almost snorted.

"Certainly not! Since when did I start speaking of a gentleman as 'he'?"

"Oh!" the young woman exclaimed, her face hardening as the rosy hue paled. "You mean—"

"Precisely," snapped the aunt. "Mrs. Yeager called me to the phone. He said to tell you that he would be here to see you this afternoon on a matter of importance."

"We shan't be here!" declared the young woman defiantly. "He shan't spoil our afternoon for us by keeping us in. Besides, I don't want to see him."

"He said that would be likely," remarked the older woman anxiously. "And he said to be sure to tell you that you had better be here to receive him."

The young woman looked for a moment like a Diana at bay. Grady, who was looking through his peephole, thrilled at her beauty. Slowly she wilted, leaned across one corner of the dressing table, and bowed her head on one arm.

"Oh, my God!" she almost whispered. "Why doesn't he leave me alone now?"

"I've noticed a peculiar change in you the past two weeks, Edna," said

the elderly lady sharply. "It isn't becoming at all. What is there between you and Jim Rindawn that I do not share? Come, my dear, I insist on your confidence."

"How I wish I might give it to you," the girl murmured brokenly.

Miss Gilchrist came within the range of Grady's vision and tenderly embraced her niece.

"There, now, my darling," she soothed, kissing the pale brow and stroking the smooth young cheek which was uppermost. "Tell Aunt Eddie all about it, like you used to do when you were a child. Come, my child, tell me. Your old aunt isn't too old and too decrepit to help you. What is the matter?"

"My dear, my dear," sobbed the young woman, her lovely voice vibrant with anguish. "I—I can't tell you. Really, it's nothing—much. I'm just a silly girl, I think. Please—"

"And maybe I'm just a silly old woman," cut in the other sharply, "but I can still see what is right under my eyes. You don't mention Judge Lethrop to me as you formerly did. And to-day is the first time the name of Celia Warner has passed your lips in I don't know how long. Are you worried over the judge's son? Are you interested in this—this Harry Lethrop?"

"Yes, yes," cried the young woman. "That is it."

"Then what has Jim Rindawn to do with it?" demanded the old lady crisply. "Answer me that!"

There was a silence.

"Very well, then," said Miss Gilchrist with a toss of her head, "I shall most certainly be present when Mr. Rindawn calls."

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Edna feverishly. "I want you to be here. Stay close by me. Don't leave me for an instant."

"Never fear," reassured the elderly woman grimly. "And I shall give Mr. Rindawn the severest tongue lashing

he ever received in his sanctimonious life if he doesn't explain a few things to me."

"Oh, for pity's sake, Aunt Eddie!" exclaimed the young lady anxiously. "Don't—don't say anything. Remember what he has done for us!"

"We are able to get along without him now," sniffed Miss Gilchrist. "There is such a thing as imposing on people who are under obligations. But I won't say anything to him if you—"

"There goes the dinner bell," interrupted the girl quickly, hastily powdering her nose and wiping her eyes. "Come, let us go. Hurry, dear. We will talk again later."

The girl hastened her aunt out into the corridor. The three police officers relaxed and gazed at each other in amazement. Burke very cautiously re-plugged the peepholes and locked the door of his room so a secret council of war could be held.

Brill exploded first.

"That was the woman who telephoned me!" he said vehemently. "I'd swear to it on a stack of Bibles higher than the Wrigley Tower. I tell you I'd know that voice anywhere. And it still has the same thrill. Gad! What an actress that woman would make!"

"Would make?" barked Grady curtly. "My dear chap, she is one! You should see her in her secretarial pose at Judge Lethrop's office. No comparison."

"Get hold of Chief MacCray," hurried on Brill in tense excitement. "He wants this woman, I know. Burke, call him on the phone. Quick! Do something before she gets away. I tell you—"

"She's not going anywhere except to the dinner table," said Grady. "Pipe down, sergeant, pipe down. MacCray knows all about it already. Why do you imagine he had me drag you over here if not to identify that golden voice? Snap out of the stupor!"

Sergeant Brill merely stared, opening and closing his mouth like a fish

out of water. It was Grady's turn next.

"What I am interested in," he went on, his voice sharpening as he warmed to his subject, "is this fellow Rindawn. My fingers are itching to curl around his throat. Every way I turn he crops up in my path. He's guilty as hell, and the chief won't let me pull him."

"Why, here we come to check up on this young woman, and Rindawn crosses our trail even here. This is going to yield much that MacCray did not anticipate. They must hold that little get-together meeting in the next room where we can hear it. This is going to be the best break of the entire—"

"Rindawn?" spluttered Brill. "Who is he?"

"James Rindawn!" declared Grady vehemently. "John Duke's butler! Alias the Beer-keg, alias Willis Gorms, alias Falstaff, alias the rich looking old gent who stole the murder gun from the Meadow's store—one of the main crooks! And he is coming here to commit himself, sure as you're born. Ye gods, what luck!"

"Sh-hhh!" cautioned Burke. "You are both too loud. Ease up on that talk. Unlock the door, Mr. Nickols, and we will resume our domino game. Our dinner will be here directly."

Dinner had become a matter of history along with half a dozen games of dominoes before anything of interest developed in the adjoining room. Immediately after the meal, however, the young woman and her aunt returned to their double chamber.

But there was no resumption of the topic interrupted for dinner. The girl pleaded a headache and straightway retired to the bedroom to lie down. The aunt remained in the sitting room. She pulled her rocker over to where she could stare squarely out the window, and there she sat as the afternoon waned, rocking and tatting.

It must have been nearly three o'clock when footsteps sounded on

the stairs and approached the chamber in which Miss Gilchrist waited. There was a gentle knock on the door and a woman's voice saying:

"Oh, Miss Boatwright?"

"That's Mrs. Yeager," whispered Burke, again removing the wall plugs.

"What is it, Mrs. Yeager?"

"A gentleman is calling on your niece, ma'am," answered the landlady. "He is in the parlor. Shall I tell him to wait?"

"What's the name?" demanded the elderly spinster quickly.

"Mr. Rindawn."

"Send him up here, please. My niece will receive him in our own sitting room."

The landlady's footsteps died away. Instantly Edna Boatwright came out of the bedroom and began pacing the floor before her aunt, her slim white fingers clenched tightly against her palms.

"Sit down, girl. You make me nervous," declared the old woman almost pettishly.

"Oh, Aunt Eddie, don't say or do anything rash," begged the girl.

"Leave it to me. Just stay with me."

"I shall do as I see fit," replied Miss Gilchrist primly. "You can govern yourself accordingly."

"Please, my dear," gasped the girl in great fear. "You don't understand. Oh, for Heaven's sake! I had better go downstairs to him. I——"

A knock on the door halted her before she took two steps.

"Come in," crisply invited Miss Gilchrist.

"Mr. Rindawn, ma'am," said the voice of Mrs. Yeager.

And the figure of a man entered Grady's restricted field of view. The big detective would have needed no name to identify that pompous, roly-poly little form with the double chin settled in the cleft of the stiffly starched collar.

John Duke's butler had put in his appearance to damn Edna Boatwright

utterly in the eyes of Mr. Grady and link her with the murder of Francis W. Keene.

"Well, well," said Mr. Rindawn in his solemn voice. "Good afternoon, ladies. I trust I see you both in excellent health. And I hope your heart condition is improving, my dear Miss Gilchrist."

"James Rindawn," began the lady directly addressed, "you—"

"You have spoiled our afternoon," cut in Edna Boatwright swiftly. "We had to remain cooped up here to wait for you when I wanted to take Aunt Edwina out for an airing. These lovely fall days don't come often. What do you want to see us about that is so urgent?"

"I did not come to see us, my dear," replied Rindawn, calmly seating himself. "I came to talk to you. Sit down, my love. Relax. Let us visit a while."

"What do you want?" she spat at him, relaxing not a whit, her tawny eyes flashing fire. "Haven't I done enough? I have betrayed a noble gentleman and his son and—and—"

"Not to speak of a very interesting lawyer by the name of Warner, eh?" added Rindawn mildly.

She flushed furiously.

"Oh, how I hate you!" she cried passionately. "Don't you dare mention his name to me in that sanctimonious way of yours. You lied to me. You deceived me cruelly. You have used me as a pawn. Why didn't you tell me that that telephone call was about a real murder and was setting the police after an innocent boy—after Harry Lethrop of all people? God only knows how I have suffered ever since."

"Why didn't I tell you, you ask? Because, my dear, I knew you might object."

"Might object?" she said bitterly. "You knew I would refuse."

"James Rindawn," Miss Gilchrist finally found speech for a second attempt, "what nonsense is this you

are talking? What terrible thing have you forced my niece to do? What is it? Edna! For the love of Heaven, tell me what this means!"

"Oh, Aunt Eddie, I am in terrible trouble! You'll not forsake me, will you? You'll stand by me, no matter what happens, won't you? I've betrayed my best friends and lost the right to accept the advances of a gallant man. Oh, have pity on me!"

Before Miss Gilchrist could more than put a protecting arm about the tempestuously sobbing girl there was a very definite interruption. The door burst violently open, and three men stepped quickly into the room.

Detective Grady could stand the pressure no longer. While his two companions leveled guns on the cherubic figure of John Duke's butler he drew forth a pair of handcuffs.

"James Rindawn, alias Willis Gorms, he said grimly, "and Edna Boatwright, I arrest both of you for criminal complicity in the murder of Francis W. Keene at the Avalon Arms Apartments on Tuesday last."

This startling dénouement was too much for the weak heart of the maiden aunt. She gave vent to one queer sound and fainted dead away. The girl quivered convulsively, then straightened herself rigidly, clamped her pretty mouth in that prim secretarial manner, and stood silently eying the leader of the intruders with smoldering eyes which scorched despite the lowered lids.

Mr. Rindawn stared into the mouths of the drawn guns of Burke and Brill and then into the fierce and watchful face of Mr. Grady with an incredulous expression. Slowly an unmistakable wrath kindled in his blue-gray eyes.

"Stick out your mitts!" snapped the big detective curtly. "I must warn you that anything you now say may be used against you."

Instead of complying with the sharp instruction, Mr. Rindawn calmly placed his hands behind his back,

arched his chest until there was a distinct sag in his abdomen, settled more flat-footedly on the floor, and smiled in the face of Mr. Grady. It was not a pleasant smile, but it was a smile that actually appeared on that solemn countenance. He spoke.

"Bert Grady," he ripped out, "you are a damned jackass! Didn't I tell you that no arrests were to be made until I gave the word? If this young woman were criminally guilty, you would have played the devil by this blunder."

The tone of that incisive voice, as well as the startling speech, made all three of the officers jump and stare at John Duke's butler in amazement. Edna Boatwright started and turned swiftly to peer at the speaker. She made three swift steps to his side and peered into his face, eye to eye. She paled in fear as she recoiled from his level gaze. Then she flushed in rising anger. Her smoldering eyes flashed fire and her lovely lips curled in hate.

With a suddenness that was tigerish she shot out her hand and grasped the thinning gray locks atop his head. One fierce jerk—and the entire scalp lifted from Mr. Rindawn's cranium, baring the close-cropped and bristling sandy hair of Philip MacCray.

"Holy Moses!" ejaculated Grady and Burke in one breath. "The chief!"

Sergeant Brill only blinked as he lowered his revolver. Then he turned it in the direction of the passionately aroused young woman. Fastening his gaze intently on her tense figure, he began edging closer. MacCray held up one dissuading hand as he felt tenderly of the spots where his dissembling silk wig had been fastened to his head.

"Never mind, Brill," said he quickly. "Miss Boatwright means no further violence. She is innocent of all intentional wrongdoing. I'll take charge here, if you please."

To the panting girl he bowed.

"I am sorry to have deceived you, my dear young lady, but it was neces-

sary. I will explain. Won't you please be seated while we see about your aunt?"

He took the wig which still dangled from her clenched fingers and gently urged her toward a chair. Like a figure in a dream she obeyed him. Then, as she sank into the seat, she suddenly burst into tears.

"Burke," grated MacCray sharply, "see to the elderly lady; you know something about the heart. Brill, guard the door. Let no one enter. This disturbance may have been loud enough to attract attention."

"What—what shall I do, chief?" asked Grady uncertainly.

"Sit down and keep quiet until I have time to read the riot act to you," rejoined MacCray grimly. "I'll do the talking from now on."

There was a silence broken only by the sobs of the girl and the low murmur between MacCray and Burke as they resuscitated Edwina Gilchrist. No other sounds were heard, but it was a most eloquent silence.

In a few minutes Miss Gilchrist was restored to consciousness. She was still dazed, and MacCray used her condition to steady the nerves of the young woman. He led the docile young lady to the side of her aunt, admonishing her to get a firm grip on herself and quiet the old lady. Then he stepped back and waited while the two women clung to each other convulsively for a moment.

After a space the younger woman looked up.

"Well, sir?" she inquired coldly. "What is the meaning of all this?"

It was the prim and impersonal secretary who now spoke.

"You are a thoroughbred, Miss Boatwright," admired MacCray. "I will now briefly—"

"Where is James Rindawn?" she interrupted anxiously. "The real James Rindawn!"

"I imagine he is beginning to give orders concerning his master's Sunday

dinner at this hour," replied the detective chief dryly.

"He knows nothing of this masquerade of yours?"

"I hope not. Now, if you—"

"What do you mean by assuming his guise and coming here? How did you know—how do you know that I am even aware of his existence?"

"Young lady, if you don't mind," MacCray snapped, "I'll ask the questions while you do the answering. First, let me inform you that James Rindawn is in imminent danger of having his neck stretched at the expense of the State. I am not trying to threaten you or intimidate you; I am merely stating a fact."

"I've always had a feeling that man would come to a bad end," commented Miss Gilchrist at this juncture, "although I cannot believe murder of him."

"I have not said he is guilty of murder—exactly, Miss Gilchrist," rejoined MacCray hopefully. "I merely said that he is in a bad position."

"What's your name, young man?" she went on sharply. "Who are you?"

"Hush, Aunt Edwina," cautioned the young woman, tightening her embrace about her relative's waist. "This is Detective Chief MacCray."

"I won't hush," stated that lady positively. "I intend getting at the bottom of this matter."

"Which sentiment does you honor," put in MacCray gallantly. "And such is my own desire."

"No, I see you do not resemble Jim Rindawn in the least," murmured the old lady, peering at him and shaking her head. "Your eyes are too gray, you are too young. No wonder you stood at a distance with the light behind you. But you are very clever."

"Thank you," he bowed. "Now, if I may resume, allow me to suggest that your niece answer my questions truthfully and fully."

"I have already learned from her own lips that she is not criminally

guilty of any misdemeanor. For the sake of justice, for the sake of the Lethrop family that she seems to honor, for the sake of her invalid aunt, for her own sake, I ask her to be frank with me."

"To be silent will not shield James Rindawn. I already have enough on him to send him to the penitentiary for the rest of his natural life. If you refuse to talk, I will be put to the necessity of arresting you, Miss Boatwright, and I will have to let Detective Grady make that arrest of Rindawn he is so anxious to do. I am not bluffing, believe me."

The four men waited. The elderly lady stroked her niece's hand encouragingly, silently urging her to meet MacCray halfway. At last the girl raised her head and gazed at the detective chief.

She rose slowly to her feet—she was fully as tall as he—and revealed to him the full splendor of her widely opened eyes. It was difficult to maintain a sense of superiority, or even of equality, face to face with this vibrant creature.

"I—I believe you and trust you, Mr. MacCray," she said wearily. "Oh, I know you too well to doubt. But you seem to know all there is to know about me. What on earth can I reveal to a man like you?"

CHAPTER XVI

Judge Lethrop Remembers

MACCRAY took her hand and pressed it gently. Then he placed a chair for her.

"Thank you for your faith," he said simply. "Please sit down. Your nerves are as taut as fiddle strings. Not only do I need your help; I see that you need mine, and you are going to have it. While you compose yourself I will explain how and why I come to be here in this manner."

"I got the first clew to the identity of the mysterious woman who called

the Robey Street station from Sergeant Brill. He had been so strongly impressed by the voice that he was able to give me a very good description. Particularly did he stress the accent of the lady's 'a.'

"Then I learned from the Duke housekeeper of the veiled woman who came there between eleven and eleven-thirty that fateful morning. That evening I saw the veiled lady at Harry Lethrop's hearing and shadowed her. She proved to be none other than Miss Edna Boatwright.

"Don't start in such surprise, my dear; you left a trail as broad as a boulevard. After that, at Judge Lethrop's office, you yourself informed me that you came from Boston. That tallied with the accent of the mysterious veiled lady. The conclusion was obvious.

"However, a guilty person—one criminally involved, I mean—would never have risked so much as to appear at the hearing. But you had lied about your aunt's health twice. At least, I knew that your second excuse to leave the office was a lie. That is why I said before you that I would order the arrest of this Signor Vincennes if he did not appear to set up a howl about his missing daughter. Since then I have checked up on your first story.

"From the moment you left the judge's office that night up to this very moment you have been shadowed. I was watching to see if there was any connection between you and this missing gentleman, or between you and the man who signs his name as Carlos Fernandez. And I found nothing except the initial connection between you and James Rindawn.

"As I was almost persuaded of your innocence, I arranged this little business this afternoon to get to the meat of the matter. I really did not need Brill's presence in the next room to identify your voice, but it is always best to cover everything possible.

"So that, Miss Edna, is the reason I passed myself off as James Rindawn. And I flatter myself that I was getting along in an excellent fashion, feeling my way along on what I already knew and what you were letting drop, until our impetuous friend, Mr. Grady over there, rushed in and spoiled the proceedings.

"Had you been a criminal accomplice, and he had no means of knowing that you were not, he would have played havoc. You see, I know what you did and how you did it. But I do not know why you have done this. That is what I must ask you. What is your connection with James Rindawn and with this crime? What hold over you has John Duke's butler?"

The young woman averted her face and answered in a low voice:

"He—he is my—uncle."

"Uncle?" This in a gasp from Grady, who had been anticipating a clandestine love complex.

"Tell your story in your own way, please," murmured MacCray, his tone betraying neither surprise nor curiosity.

At first she spoke haltingly and with difficulty. Then, as her passionate nature asserted itself, her speech became rapid, her words became living, vital things. Her listeners were spell-bound, their imaginations filling in the details about her graphic phrases.

"James Rindawn is my uncle," she repeated. "He is not—related to Aunt Edwina here. She is my father's half sister—he is—my mother's own brother. Both sides of my family are New Englanders.

"My father—was supposed to have married beneath himself. He didn't know then that Uncle Jim—my mother's brother—was a butler. If he had—I don't suppose it would have made any difference. Both my parents died when I was a small child, my father losing all his own and Aunt Edwina's inheritance in bad business management. Aunt Edwina took me,

"But we would have starved if Uncle Jim had not come forward with assistance. I was too young to care, and for my sake Aunt Edwina humbled the pride of the Gilchrist and Boatwright families to accept an annuity from—from a butler.

"But this wasn't so bad. Uncle Jim was my own relative, and he meant well. I have never been ashamed of the relationship nor of his profession," she declared defiantly, her head lifting proudly. "It was Aunt Edwina who made a pact with him that he was never to claim relationship and never presume on the blood tie or the financial obligation. And you must not think harshly of her for that; she did it for my sake and the sake of my future.

"Thus, I went to the best schools, mingled in the society to which Aunt Edwina was accustomed, and held up my head as a Boatwright in respectable circumstances. I must say that Uncle Jim held strictly to his bargain during those early years. I have even been a guest in a home where he was in service, and he never presumed once. Oh, I felt so sorry for him and so ashamed of myself at that time. I never went back to that home.

"Then things changed. Uncle Jim showed us that steel could lie under the velvet glove. He came to us one day and informed us that he was changing masters. He was coming to Chicago with Mr. John Duke. He told us bluntly that we must come with him or he would stop his allowance. There was nothing else to do.

"But that wasn't all. As soon as he got us here he informed me that I was nothing but a parasite and now that I was away from my silk stocking friends I was going to work and help bear the burden of our expenses. Not only that, but I was to obey his orders implicitly or he would starve us to death as well as disgrace us back in Boston.

"I didn't mind. I was glad to be doing something. Perhaps the way he had been excluded all the years before

—maybe the social gulf between him and father's family had embittered him. At least, there has never been any great affection between us in spite of all he has done for me. Maybe it is my fault!

"Well, to go on, Uncle Jim got me my position with Judge Lethrop as an office girl. I rose to the position of private secretary through my own efforts. None of you know how hard I worked, how I struggled to succeed. And I had to fight—fight to subdue my impulsive nature and be nothing but an efficient underling.

"And now that I have made good on my own accord, that obligation of the past which I could not ignore—which is responsible for my present state of being—has reached forth and dragged me down into the mire of crime.

"My benefactor, without my knowledge, has made a criminal accomplice of me. He has forced me to betray the finest gentleman I have ever known—Judge Lethrop. Fool that I was, I paid back my obligation to him in the way that he demanded! Yes, I did all that you accuse me of!

"I did more! It was through me that James Rindawn knew all about the Crawley case though I still do not understand what that had to do with the Keene murder. I am a guilty, criminal, deceitful woman! And here at the last I turn and betray James Rindawn.

"I am a faithless, worthless Judas who has turned against everybody in turn. Oh, God, what a useless life mine has been!"

With this last tragic utterance she was on her feet with arms flung widely apart in abandon, her young bosom heaving passionately. She was glorious in this moment of abandonment. And she had stripped her soul so bare that MacCray felt as though she stood naked before him. Even Detective Grady averted his eyes, feeling a sense of shame that he had driven such a splendid creature against the wall of despair.

Miss Gilchrist got to her feet and folded her niece in her arms.

"You poor, poor child," she murmured tenderly. "You are not a bad girl at all. You have done nothing terribly wrong. You are not a Judas. You have never deserted or betrayed me. Hush! Don't sob so. Aunt Eddie will stand by you against the whole world. Come, dry your eyes, my precious. Now then, gentlemen, I trust you are satisfied!"

MacCray did not answer for the moment. Silently he motioned his subordinates out of the room. They departed quietly. Only when he was alone with the two women did MacCray speak. He approached and laid a gentle hand upon Edna Boatwright's arm.

"My dear," he said softly, "I will not say you have not erred, but you have betrayed no one. You have merely been used as one little pawn on a very large board in a game all the moves of which I do not yet understand. I am deeply sorry for you, and I shall help you."

"What you have said this afternoon will be held in the strictest confidence. You will continue on in Judge Lethrop's employ as though nothing has happened. I shall do all in my power to shield you from all further annoyance.

"However, I cannot guarantee one hundred per cent protection from the master mind who plays the black men. I have not yet run him to earth, although the scent is growing stronger. Therefore, should anything else develop, should anything befall you that my men might overlook, I simply ask you to telephone me personally. In brief, I am asking for your confidence from this moment on. Will you trust me? Will you help me?"

The girl had become calm. She raised her reddened eyes, dried them hastily on her aunt's kerchief, and smiled tremulously, a full-lipped smile which made her face beautiful.

"You are the most wonderful man I ever knew," she murmured fervently.

"I did not know a detective could be so wise—and so human."

"That is undeserved praise, my dear. I think I am human, but I am not wise—at least, not wise enough. If I had not been such a suspicious person I would have made a confidant of you that first night we met and thus have spared us both unpleasantness. Do you feel composed enough now for me to ask you a few questions?"

"I'll tell you anything I can," she promised earnestly.

"Then tell me what you know about Joseph Crawley. Where did you ever hear of him before? Why should your uncle be interested in Judge Lethrop's action in the case?"

"Mr. MacCray, that is an utter mystery to me," she said solemnly. "I think that is partly what worried me—my ignorance. I never heard of the man before, I know nothing about him save what I have seen in the papers and through the work I have done on Judge Lethrop's papers, and I see no reason for my—my uncle being interested in the matter unless it is that the crime was committed almost under his nose."

"What—ah! Merciful Heaven! Can it be that he was implicated in *that* murder? Was there something which was not revealed by the evidence? Oh, don't tell me he is—is guilty of the actual deed."

"Calm your fears," smiled the little man gently, reassuringly. "I can safely state that James Rindawn is entirely innocent of the crime for which Joseph Crawley is condemned to hang. But there is a deep-seated reason for his interest in the affair. I have grounds for one line of suspicion, but I always try to exhaust every angle of a subject before I reach a decision. Then, if you can tell me nothing of Mr. Crawley, what can you tell about this Carlos Fernandez and his mysterious note—now that we are working together?"

The young woman blushed in faint self-consciousness, but she met his gaze.

"I swear that I know nothing about it," she responded. "Mr. Warner and I really did go through the judge's files trying to find that name and associate it with some case in which Judge Lethrop had participated in the past. We found absolutely nothing. Neither of us has any knowledge of such a person."

MacCray nodded calmly.

"And, a last question, now about the unknown Signor Vincennes and his daughter Christine?"

"I never heard of them before Harry Lethrop mentioned their names. I haven't the remotest idea who they are, or what they are, but Harry said they existed—and therefore I believe it."

"You are interested in Harry Lethrop?" This, softly.

"Not in a personal way," she answered openly. "I am two or three years older than he is. But he is a dear boy, and I admire him. If he said these people existed, I would swear to it."

"You are right," replied MacCray quietly. "They do, and they are both missing. I won't trouble you any longer, and neither will Mr. Burke. However, he will remain here as a lodger, not to shadow you, but to be near in case you should need him."

"And all I ask of you two ladies is to remain as silent about this afternoon's affairs as I shall be. Keep it strictly to yourselves! Forget that I have been here! Forget that Burke is a detective unless you need him! Is it a bargain?"

"It is, sir. What—what are you going to do with my—my uncle?"

"James Rindawn? Absolutely nothing at present. Rest easy on that score. And, while I may be mistaken, let me whisper a word of consolation. I do not suspect him of being a murderer. Good afternoon, ladies. Keep a stiff upper lip."

In Burke's room MacCray confronted the guilty-looking trio of officers with an air that boded them no good,

Detective Grady sought to evade the brewing storm by conjuring up a windy outburst of his own.

"Chief, I'm sorry I disobeyed orders, but I thought I was following the proper lead. You know, you sent me here without very definite instructions. Anyway, it's all my fault. Don't blame Burke or Brill."

"But I guess you're satisfied now about this Rindawn-Gorms bird. Are you ready for me to slap the bracelets on him? The idea of dragging a girl like that down in the mud! That guy is causing more trouble than prohibition. I never knew you to play cat and mouse so long with a murderer before."

"Murderer?" ripped out MacCray in ugly tones. "Murderer! Aren't you jumping at conclusions, Grady? Rindawn-Gorms, you call him? You did the same thing yesterday morning after we sweated Crawley, Grady, I thought you were a bright detective!"

"How in hell can James Rindawn be at his post in John Duke's home and admit his niece to make the telephone call and be on the job at the Avalon Arms Apartments as janitor at the same time? How in the name of all that's holy can you persist in this silly idea that James Rindawn and Willis Gorms are the same man? No matter how guilty Rindawn may be, he is not twins."

"You've let a physical similarity confuse you. If you are going to insist on being so dumb, go take the manager of the Avalon Arms over to view Duke's butler. As soon as young Lethrop comes back I'll let him go out with you. I warned you before you ever saw Duke's butler not to be surprised or alarmed at his appearance."

"My God! What sort of dumbbells do I have on my staff of detectives?"

Detective Grady collapsed utterly. Burke stared foolishly. Sergeant Brill began whistling soundlessly and stood gazing out the window.

MacCray opened his mouth for a

stronger and more scathing attack, but the abject condition of Grady halted him. The big fellow was actually on the verge of tears. The detective chief closed his lips silently.

"You're right, chief," murmured Grady leadenly. "I'm nothing but a big boob. If I hadn't been so anxious I'd have stopped to think of anything as plain as that. I—I—well, I'll resign from the force if you ask me to."

"Just what were you so anxious about?" inquired MacCray in a milder voice.

Grady flushed and made a clean breast of it.

"I—I felt sorry for the Lethrop kid," he muttered. "I believed his yarn, and I wanted to help him out."

"How do you feel about Edna Boatwright now?"

"Her? Why—er—well, you know, I feel just as bad about her," admitted Grady.

"Doesn't it strike you as a poor policy for a detective to get sympathetic over each suspect he follows in turn?" inquired MacCray ironically. "I suppose you would break down after you put the bracelets on Rindawn and let him go free because of his heartbroken grandmother?"

"You are soft on Lethrop and this skirt yourself," flung Grady defensively.

"My friend," smiled MacCray, "your heart is, like mine, too big for you to be a perfect detective. I begin to have an idea that this case is going to break us both. If I resign and start a private agency, will you work for me?"

"For next to nothing," declared Grady earnestly.

MacCray laughed in pleased tones. The storm was over.

"All right, men," he said crisply. "Sergeant Brill, you're relieved from further duty. Burke, you stay on as a sort of protective guard for Miss Boatwright and her aunt in this house.

"Grady, since you are so anxious to

help young Lethrop, I'm going to put you on his end of the case. You've already surveyed the lay of things at Jefferson Park. Now you can go down to the Bon Ton Apartments near Cicero and join Huhan, who is on duty there watching over Lethrop. I promised the lad that I wouldn't interfere with his own investigations, but, of course, I had to cover him."

The three men saluted in relief.

"As for me," went on MacCray briskly, "I think I shall have the privilege of scanning a page from the past of somebody else before the day is over. I hope to have better luck this time."

It was scarcely six o'clock when the coupé of the detective chief turned in at the hedge-bordered drive to Judge Henry Lethrop's home in Bittersweet Place. The massive old clock on the stair landing bonged out the hour in its deep, cathedral tones as he was assisted out of his topcoat and shown into the library.

No one would have recognized this exquisitely turned out gentleman as the man who had been at Mrs. Yeager's west side boarding-house not three hours before. All resemblance to the preternaturally grave Mr. Rindawn had vanished. In fact, this was not the well known figure of Philip MacCray himself. For this gentleman wore a tuxedo, an attire which his broad shoulders carried to perfection.

Mr. MacCray had made an unusual sacrifice in sartorial effects. In short, Mr. MacCray had a dinner engagement which he was filling properly.

There was only one person in the library, however, upon the detective chief's entrance. This individual, similarly attired, rose from his armchair and came forward cordially to greet the guest. His step was firm and his back was as straight as ever, but the face of Judge Lethrop was careworn and drawn. If anything, his mane of hair was whiter than it had been a week ago.

Judge Lethrop was showing his age under the strain.

"It was good of you to come for dinner," he greeted MacCray warmly. "I don't think I could have gone through the ghastly motions of dining alone. Yet I could not bear the thought of going out where others could see me. This is the first Sunday night in years that Harry hasn't sat across the table from me."

The detective chief pressed his hand sympathetically.

"I can readily understand how lonely you feel under the circumstances, Judge Lethrop. And, believe me, I was glad to accept the dinner invitation. I am habitually a lonely man. When I am not at work on a case, Sundays are trackless wastes for me."

"I wonder that you are not a married man, Mr. MacCray."

A shadow fell across the smaller man's face. He stared with eyes of pain into the fireplace. Judge Lethrop was quick to perceive.

"Pardon me," he said gently. "I did not mean to touch a tender spot."

MacCray smiled at him and imperceptibly straightened his shoulders.

"That is quite all right, sir," said he. "As I am here with the intention of prying into your past this evening, it is only fair that I feel no delicacy about my own. Shall we talk now, or do you prefer waiting until after dinner?"

"As you please," replied the judge, glancing at his watch. "Dinner won't be served until six-thirty. Will you have a cigar?"

"Thank you," said MacCray, accepting one and settling down comfortably in his chair. "Suppose we talk about me now and about you after dinner?"

The judge, looking politely puzzled at this second reference to himself, made a gesture of assent.

"How old a man do you take me to be?" asked MacCray after a silence.

"That is hard to say," hazarded

Judge Lethrop slowly, "although I should think you are in your early thirties."

"I will be forty-one my next birthday," said MacCray soberly. "Rather an old dog to be taught marital tricks, don't you think?"

"Perhaps not," smiled the other. "Wait until the right woman comes along."

"She came—eleven years ago this fall," answered the detective chief reminiscently. "She swept across the path of my life like a vivid, exotic flame and then went away, leaving my future a ruin of black and smoldering fields."

"Do you wish me to ask what you mean, my friend?" said Lethrop gently.

MacCray winked the moisture from his eyes and gripped his cigar fiercely between a row of strong jaw teeth so that one side of his face was wrinkled. When he spoke again his voice was hard and cold.

"I have every reason to believe that she was shot at Brussels as a Prussian spy."

"Ah!" murmured the old judge softly. "Then you saw service during the war?"

"I was in the same profession," replied MacCray in faint bitterness. "But I was luckier and on the victorious side. In retrospect, now that the bitter war hatred has died down, I see no reason for even condemning, more than any other, the cause for which she gave her life. Anyway, that is the reason I am a lonely old devil to-day. I can sympathize with your present state. But, unless I have been reading signs wrong, this is going to be a still livelier household than before when Harry comes out of this affair."

"You mean the missing girl?"

MacCray nodded.

Judge Lethrop looked very grave. "I don't know what to think about it. I am greatly worried."

"Forget it," admonished the detective chief. "Your son has a very level head for a man of his age. Don't try

to think about it. Let matters work out in that direction of their own accord. You may be surprised at the result."

A soft-footed butler entered the library.

"Dinner is served, Judge Lethrop," he announced in a low voice.

It was not until after the meal that MacCray broached the subject he had come to discuss. Settled once more in the library, he opened the topic he had been careful to avoid at the table.

"Judge Lethrop," he said, "have you thought any more about the mysterious note you received the day of the murder?"

"I have thought of it constantly," was the low rejoinder.

"What do you make of it by now?"

"Absolutely nothing. It is a profound mystery to me."

"You do not recall Mr. Carlos Fernandez?"

"Not at all."

"But you concede the fact that he must have existed at one time in your life?"

"Obviously," shrugged Judge Lethrop. "Else the message would be pointless."

"It would," agreed MacCray. "Let me help you rediscover the gentleman in question. Do you mind?"

"If you only can, sir."

"Very well, I can try. You remember that Francis Keene died with a verbal message on his lips to one Elihu, the words he spoke to your son. Well, I have not yet informed you that these words were meant for the ears of John—Elihu—Duke. Does this information convey anything to you?"

The judge started. "You mean the philanthropist?" Then he slowly shook his head. "Not a thing."

"All right," said MacCray, not at all discouraged. "Let us analyze the words themselves. I have here a copy of the speech as Harry remembered it. Read it. The dashes stand for missing words."

The judge accepted the sheet of plain white paper upon which the detective chief had typed the following:

I'm dying, Elihu. Forgive me for
— I — have known — than
— trust — after — years with
you — real friend — your —
known to — implacable — hate of
hell — bend closer — forgive me,
Elihu, and beware — my — car —
lost — for — not — ease — bum —
paying — dear.

"You will note that the last nine words are closer together than the rest of the broken speech," said MacCray. "That is Harry's recollection of the way it was spoken, as though fewer syllables were missing. The lad is very positive about the exact way the dying man spoke."

"I can make nothing of it," said the judge after a brief study.

"Neither could I—until Captain Holman interviewed Joseph Crawley the other morning for me. And that really disinterested gentleman, without knowing it, revealed the clew which has enabled me to decipher the message.

"It is not a code of any kind, merely broken speech. It is, of course, impossible to fill in exactly the gaps where two or more words are missing, but I can give the latter part of the speech exactly as it was meant. There are no words missing in that; the spacing and pronunciation are merely at fault.

"Listen as I point it out and read it aloud. And carry your memory back thirty years for me while you listen."

MacCray slowly spoke the last eight words with an entirely different syllable grouping. He said:

"Carlost Fornotease, Bumpay, Ing-dear."

He quickly drew a second paper from his pocket, thrusting it under the judge's thumb and over the first sheet.

"Translated," he explained, "it looked like this."

Carlos Fernandez, Bombay, India.

The old jurist stared at the words.

"Roughly," went on MacCray hypnotically, "the entire speech went something like this: 'I'm dying, Elihu. Forgive me for what I have done. I should have known better than to trust that devil after all the years with you, who are my real friend. You are known to your most implacable enemy who hates you with the hate of hell. Bend closer! Forgive me, Elihu, and beware your enemy—Carlos Fernandez, Bombay, India.'"

"Great God!" ejaculated Judge Lethrop in tones of horror. "I—I begin to have a dim recollection—let me think what that affair was. There was so many escapades—I was in a drunken stupor at the time—The details are very hazy—I can't conceive of such bitter and deadly animosity—Thirty years! Merciful God!"

"Suppose you explain," murmured MacCray, his nostrils expanding eagerly with the warmth of the scent.

TO BE CONCLUDED

How to Act at Hangings

A BOOK telling how to act at executions has never been written, but there are certain forms of deportment which are strictly enforced. The wording of the invitations, for instance, is often very proper.

When F. J. Wattron, sheriff of Navaho County, Arizona, sent out invitations for the hanging of George Smiley, convicted of murder, he committed a social error for which the newspapers soundly berated him.

His invitation was worded as follows:

Holbrook, Arizona.

Mr. _____:

You are cordially invited to attend the hanging of one George Smiley, murderer.

His soul will be swung into eternity on December 8, 1899, at 2 P.M. sharp.

Latest improved methods in the art of scientific strangulation will be employed, and everything possible will be done to make the surroundings cheerful and the execution a success.

F. J. WATTRON, Sheriff of Navaho County.

There was a storm of criticism. Editorial writers argued that the sheriff was being flippant about a very solemn occasion. The Governor of the State finally granted a respite until he could make an investigation of the affair. A new date was set, and the sheriff tried his hand again at writing the invitation.

This was his second:

Holbrook, Arizona.

Mr. _____:

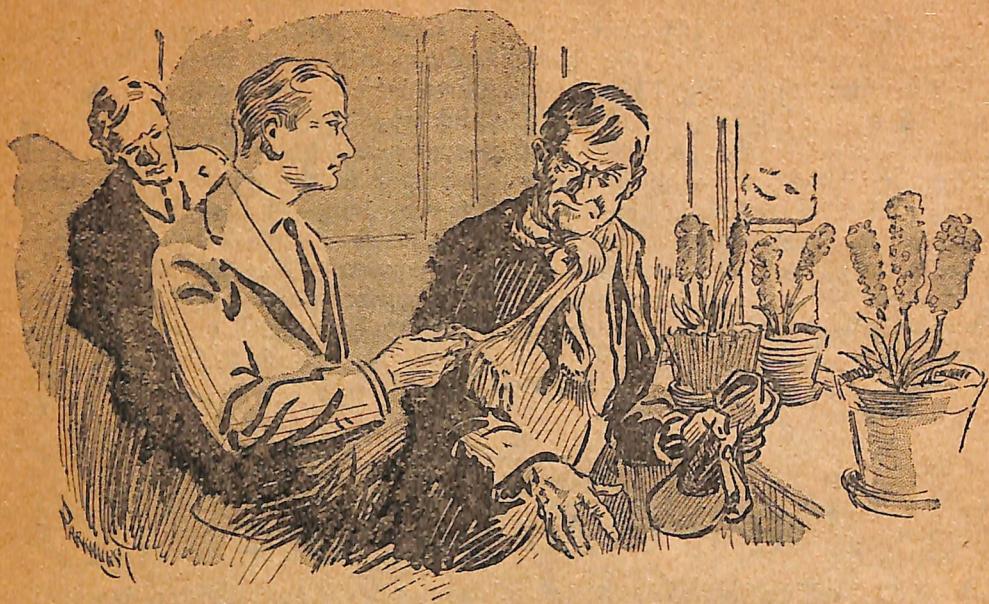
With feelings of profound sorrow and regret, I hereby invite you to attend and witness the private, decent and humane execution of a human being, name—George Smiley, crime—murder.

The said George Smiley will be executed on January 8, 1900, at 2 P.M.

You are expected to deport yourself in a respectful manner and any flippant or unseemly language or conduct on your part will not be tolerated. Conduct on any one's part, bordering on ribaldry and tending to mar the solemnity of the occasion, will not be allowed.

F. J. WATTRON, Sheriff of Navaho County.

P. S.—I would suggest that a committee, consisting of Governor Murphy, Editors Dunbar, Randolph and Hull wait on our next Legislature and have a form of invitation to executions embodied in our laws.



Pennington pulled him round by the ends of his big green scarf

The Crimson Death

It Was Ginger-Haired, Pock-Marked Joe Mortimer Who Loosed the Deadly Scourge that Struck in the Darkness

By Edmund Snell

NEVER, I believe, in all my experience with one of the most desperate criminals in history, have I encountered anything quite so horrible as the Crimson Death. Nor have I now any doubt that the victim of this latest example of Oriental ingenuity was intended to be myself.

It was one of those glorious spring mornings when one feels that it is good to be alive. Breakfast was finished and cleared away, and I was reading my paper by the long leaded-paned window when the boyish face and Chinese eyes of Peter Pennington came round the door.

"Top of the morning, Gray!" he laughed, and settled himself down on the arm of a chair by the fireplace.

"Meditating a day's hike?" he queried presently, interrupting the rolling of a cigarette to kick my bag of golf-clubs standing propped against the table.

"Gouldie phoned me from my chambers that there was nothing doing," I answered, "and I decided to take a day off."

He glanced at the clock on the mantelshelf.

"Sorry, old son," he rejoined, "but I'm afraid I've got to disappoint you. Parsons and Hodges are due here at ten and they're bringing a chap named Mortimer with them.

"Hard-bitten little devil Mortimer! —but I assure you, Gray, he's got a yarn that'll make your hair stand on

end. It's about the umpteenth time we've used this place of yours as a conference chamber, but I know you won't mind. The fact is he knows more than he cares to tell us about a little bloke with a yellow face and the most murderous disposition I've met—"

"Meaning Chanda-Lung, of course?"

"True, O, King! Meaning Chanda-Lung."

A chunk of white ash from his cigarette dropped on to his knee and he brushed it off.

"Lord, Gray!" he continued, talking rapidly. "I've been learning a lot these past few weeks. I've barged into the lowest haunts of Bermondsey, Whitechapel and Limehouse, disguised as a coal-heaver, Chinese, anything you like. It's been tremendously interesting, I can tell you.

"Chanda-Lungism, to coin a phrase, is petering out. He came to Europe a year ago, financed by powerful Eastern syndicates. The confidence of a hemisphere was behind him—and he promised 'em quick returns. They got 'em at first, but they can't get them now.

"We've got him running, don't you see. He daren't operate from the same place twice."

I folded my paper and pitched it into a chair.

"That's why it's so deucedly difficult to locate him," I interposed.

"Precisely. This campaign of his to shift the center of commerce across the globe is not just the effort of a dreamer, with all the tricks of the East in his pocket and a few stanch pals gather about him to back him up. It was a world movement—an *under-world* movement!"

"Every lascar that shipped as a stoker on an ocean-going steamer was in it. It was behind the riots in Calcutta, Java, Rangoon. Wu-Chong-Hi, the defeated dictator of Central China, was in it up to the hilt.

"Communism cut no ice in compari-

son with a menace that had hundreds of millions behind it.

"When you and I came in, the train of mysterious assassinations, that had begun in Lhassa and Tokyo, was continuing here. Scotland Yard couldn't tackle it; they didn't know where to start. I think we can claim that we cramped Mr. Chanda-Lung's style!"

He rose to his feet and began pacing the room, leaving me watching him curiously, wondering where this rare stream of eloquence was going to lead.

I saw him stop to admire a row of blue hyacinths set in earthenware pots along the window sill.

"The patience of the East isn't quite what it used to be," he threw back at me. "Interest is dropping off, Java's quiet, the Calcutta business has petered out—and General Wu-Chong-Hi was blown to blazes in his own train yesterday!"

I moved impatiently.

"You haven't told me yet where Mortimer comes in."

He turned and faced me, his back to the window.

"Mortimer, I honestly believe, is part of Chanda-Lung's last line of attack—one of those renegade Europeans that for one reason and another have sworn allegiance to the Yellow Scorpion."

I looked up sharply.

"One of the gang?" I gasped.

Pennington nodded.

"According to his own story, he is a chair-mender by trade, and a member of the Chanda-Lung fraternity by accident!"

"You think he's reliable?"

"That's what we have to find out. He seems ready to talk about himself; our job is to persuade him to divulge something about Chanda-Lung. If we can only manage to do that we may be a deal for'arder."

I could see that Pennington was in one of his optimistic moods. Personally, the cancelling of a golf appointment and recollections of many

vain chases after our arch-bandit, combined to give me a more skeptical outlook.

II

ATAP came on the door presently and my landlady announced Inspector Parsons.

Parsons came in, looking more like a lizard than ever in a gray suit and a hard hat. A still shorter man followed, stocky, ginger-haired and pock-marked, surveying every fresh object he met with an air of suspicion. The burly Hodges brought up the rear.

I offered them chairs and they all sat down, the officers perfectly at their ease in a room that had known many similar gatherings, Joe Mortimer perching himself on the very edge of the seat, nursing his cap. I pushed over a box of cigarettes and Sergeant Hodges gave him one before helping himself.

"Cheer up, Joe!" he cried. "Make yourself at home! They're not goin' to eat you!"

The cigarettes were cork-tipped and Mortimer, in his confusion, ignited the wrong end by mistake. Trying to rectify the error, he burned his lips and spat into the fender.

Parsons rose suddenly and joined us at the window.

"We've got to humor this fellow," he confided in a low voice. "We can get a lot out of him, provided we handle him properly."

Leaving Hodges to entertain him, we strolled out into the bedroom.

"How much do you know already?" asked Pennington.

Parsons moistened his lips.

"Born in Camberwell," he said, reading from a notebook. "News-vendor, boxer, race course tout. Ran away to sea at fourteen, deserted ship at Karachi. Blank here for a couple of years, can't get him to talk about those! Laborer on dockworks at Singapore. Drifted to China. Joined a pearl-diving outfit bound for New

Guinea. Turned gold miner and did time out there for something or other—exact nature not disclosed.

"Home for the war and enlisted Royal Scots. Deserted. Joined Naval Division. Deserted. Highland Light Infantry—and deserted again! Served in France and Gallipoli. Prisoner with the Turks. Escaped—"

"A slippery customer!" commented Pennington under his breath.

"Another blank here," pursued the inspector, not noticing the interruption. "Turned up in China again four years ago, as servant to Chanda-Lung—"

I whistled softly.

"Did he, by Jove?"

Parsons closed his book.

"Briefly, gentleman," he continued, looking from one to the other, "that is the history of Mr. Joe Mortimer. A pretty grim record, reading between the lines! After the last episode he came home to Battersea, married and started business as an itinerant mender of chairs.

"Last week, as he will tell you when we go in, he met Chanda-Lung face to face in Epsom. It was not a pleasant interview for Mortimer, as you can imagine. He won't say why or how he left China. Very possibly he murdered somebody to get away, and Chanda-Lung held that over his head."

"He was ordered to call at an address in Hoxton," said Pennington, carrying on at this point. "He went and was given certain things and very definite instructions.

"The things included the usual warning-card bearing the yellow scorpion sign, a jade-handled knife, smeared with the fatal *ipoh batang* poisoning and carefully sheathed, and a yellow card bearing a name and address. The instructions were to kill Inspector Parsons here within seven days!"

Parsons nodded grimly.

"But for a stroke of luck, my number would have been up by to-night!" he smiled.

"Mortimer got cold feet and went to the police?" I hazarded, vainly trying to connect the shabby, red-haired man in the next room with the desperate adventurer of Parsons's notebook.

"Hardly that," said the detective. "Joe was afraid of us—and mortally scared of Chanda-Lung. In his dilemma he went out and got drunk. The Sutton police took him and found the things on him. They called up the Yard and I went down immediately."

"Even then Joe wasn't talking! He stuck to the tale he'd found the things in a garbage-heap until I persuaded him the crimes that troubled his personal conscience were of no particular interest to us."

"He's made five consecutive statements since then—and they all read differently; but I'm pinning my faith on the first—the one he got out before he had time to remember what Chanda-Lung had promised to do to him if he split!"

III

WE returned to the living room to find Joe Mortimer sitting with his head on his hands and his shifty eyes fixed on the carpet. At the sound of the door closing he sat up with a start.

Hodges was standing back from the window, looking out on a vista of trim-clipped privet hedges and a broad roadway with red tiled pavements and lime trees set on either side at intervals. He turned as we filed in.

"What's up, Joe?" he demanded in his deep, booming voice of the much-traveled scarecrow in the chair. "Feeling depressed?"

The little man clutched at the green scarf at his throat. His freckled face—lined and yellowed like old parchment—had gone a shade paler than when I first saw him, and the corners of his mouth twitched queerly.

"He's 'ere, I tell you!" he whispered suddenly, casting a nervous glance around the room. "I can feel

'im lookin' at me from somewhere. If he knows that I've told you, 'e'll—"

The sergeant crossed and bent over him.

"Who's here, Joe?" he asked.

"Chanda-Lung!" came the low response. "'E ain't human, sir, straight 'e ain't. If you'd worked for 'im, same as I 'ave, you'd understand. I've seen things in China—"

With a sudden bound he was out of the chair and over by the window, peering out.

Parsons dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Pull yourself together," he advised him sternly. "You're safe enough with us. We'll look after you."

"Safe!" echoed Mortimer with fine irony. "There ain't such a word as far as 'e's concerned! I've worked for 'im, I tell you, and I know. I was a fool to 'ave opened my mouth. I could 'ave told you blokes anything!"

I can see that extraordinary warped figure as I write, the man of many trades and many vicissitudes, in his shabby gray suit, frayed at the cuffs and faded at the knees, clutching at a window sill where hyacinths bloomed, scanning a sun-lit street with terror in his eyes.

What he expected to see there I cannot say. The white-coated milkman with his wagon bore no semblance to the redoubtable master of crime we sought, and there was no one else in sight but an old man being pushed by a nurse in a bath-chair and two children playing with a toy tricycle.

Pennington strode up to him and pulled him round by the fringed ends of a preposterous green scarf that wound round and round his scraggy neck and deputized for a collar and tie.

"What was this address in Hoxton, Joe?" he demanded.

The other shook his head.

"I can't tell you no more," he moaned. "Straight I can't."

"Can you take us there?" I interposed.

The question seemed to throw him into a greater panic than ever, and he trembled visibly.

"Not for a million pounds!" he asserted. "Not if you was to put in my 'ands!" His manner changed suddenly and he looked me straight in the eyes. "I ain't afraid of death, guv'nor; I've seen it too often. It's not just plain, ordinary death I'm scared of—knives or a gun—or drownin' at sea."

"In a way that's natural; an' it's quick. But when 'e kills, it comes to you slowly—orribly! 'E finds you alone somewhere—in the dark, and lets you feel it comin'—and when it comes it ain't finished!"

Pennington nodded.

"Do you know what will happen to you, Joe, if you fail to carry out Chanda-Lung's commands?" he jerked out quickly.

Mortimer gulped.

"*The Crimson Death!*" he answered huskily.

We exchanged glances. It was the first definite fact we had elicited that morning.

"And what's that like, Joe?" boomed out Hodges from the middle of the room.

A wild cry escaped Joe's lips. The index finger of his right hand, short and stubby and dark as mahogany, indicated a first-floor window of the opposite house. Brought to the window in a body, we saw the vague outline of a head and shoulders vanishing into the inner darkness.

Pennington nudged me.

"Did you see those eyes?" he queried excitedly. "Mortimer was right, old son. That's Chanda-Lung himself—or I'm a Dutchman. Who lives in that house?"

"People named Henderson. They're away, I believe. The gardener looks after it."

He was out of the room and down the stairs like a shot, with Hodges lumbering at his heels. I followed as far

as the landing and remembered Parsons. He called to me as I looked back into the room.

"All right, Gray. You carry on. I'll stop."

The others were already in the garden of the empty house by the time I caught them. Our insistent knocking bringing no response, Hodges squeezed in by a loose window at the back and admitted us by the side door. I glanced in at the kitchen as I passed.

It was white tiled and beautifully clean; in the scullery at the far end a tap was dripping. Something, protruding just beyond the door that separated these two rooms, caught my attention. It was the sole of a hob-nailed boot. In a less tidy place I might not have noticed it.

I slipped back and recoiled in amazement from the huddled form to which the boot was attached—the lifeless corpse of the Henderson's gardener, with glassy eyes staring up at a very white ceiling and a series of vivid crimson marks around his throat!

For minutes on end I stared at him, rooted to the spot in mute horror. The sound of the others coming down roused me to action.

"There's nothing there," Hodges was saying. "You're certain you saw him, Mr. Pennington? It might have been a trick of Mortimer's to get us away so that he could bolt."

"Here!" I called. "Both of you! Quick!"

"What is it?" asked Pennington, coming in at the kitchen door.

"*The Crimson Death!*" I answered.

It was queer that! I scarcely remembered framing the words—and yet the expression came to me quite glibly. Either this fresh product of the ingenuity of Chanda-Lung was aptly named, or I was merely echoing Mortimer's words.

Pennington uttered an exclamation and dropped on his knees beside me. Hodges leaned against the door, mopping his forehead.

"Poor devil!" he ejaculated. "I supposed he's snuffed out?"

Pennington looked up.

"Clean out!" he diagnosed. "Been dead for the past hour or more. Search the top floor again thoroughly, Hodges, we may have missed something. Gray, you nip out into the grounds."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a crashing of glass sounded above us, followed by a duller noise outside. We reached the pavement in a bunch, in time to see a long saloon car streaking off into the distance.

It must have come at some mysterious signal from a turning and slowed down for our quarry outside, for a door that had been swinging open was pulled to as we looked.

Hodges jotted down the number and made off for the garage at the corner without a word.

IV

WE'LL get Parsons," Pennington sang after him, and we crossed the road together. Leaving him at the telephone in the hall, I pushed on upstairs. The door of the living room was wide open; at first sight the room was empty! I paused on the threshold, puzzled at this fresh development.

Chanda-Lung, for all his uncanny ingenuity, could not have been here too! We had heard him escape and seen the car that helped him! And then I spotted Mortimer's cap on the floor by my golf-bag, and a yard or so of thick green scarf trailing across the carpet.

Something moved convulsively on the far side of the table, and groaned. I crossed the room, moving cautiously, and stumbled upon the recumbent form of Inspector Parsons.

His fingers clutched at his throat and it was not until I had lifted him into a chair that I noticed there the same chain of crimson marks that I had found on the body at the opposite house.

"He—tricked—me!" he managed to get out. "It was—in—his scarf!" And then his eyes closed.

Pennington came in and we moved him to my bed. I went down and rang up a doctor. By the time I got back the blinds were drawn and the man with the Chinese eyes was experimenting on Parsons with a hypodermic syringe and a selection of strange drugs in a flat aluminium case.

"I think he's easier," he said in a low voice. "If we pull him out of this we'll have a lot to thank old Professor Okura for and his '*Malay Poisons and their Antidotes?*'"

He tapped the case.

Bending over Parsons, I was inclined to agree. His breathing was fairly regular and the rash at his throat looked less vivid.

"How did you know which to use?" I asked.

"I didn't. I glanced through the symptoms in Okura's little book—and took my chance."

For the moment his answer staggered me, until I remembered his vast experience of native habits and his previous experiences with Okura's aluminium box.

I found myself jerked back to Everett's house in Kensington on the night that the White Owl called. Pennington himself had been the victim then—and I the physician.

Stricken with a drug that normally killed in ten seconds, he had given me the number of the antidote to use! And then there was the case of Ducros at Argeles.

By the evening Parsons was better.

We had seen him in the hospital after a day of fruitless wandering in the district Mortimer had named. Hodges had trailed the runaway car, overhauled it in Kennington—and found it empty! The driver had been taken to the Yard and questioned, but had divulged nothing. He was being detained for further examination.

We returned to my rooms for din-

ner, as bang up against a blank wall as we ever had been. The subtle combination of Chinese and Hindu that walked the earth as Chanda-Lung carried out its work effectively, drawing false scents across the trail and vanishing completely while we followed them.

The irritating point was that we had fallen into a trap, succumbed to what seemed to me afterward as the simplest piece of strategy conceivable.

I gave my views to Pennington from my armchair after dinner.

"We've been too regular in our habits, Penn," I insisted. "Chanda-Lung knows this place well, knows, too, that we get together pretty frequently here. Like you with the dope, he chanced his arm—and chanced it pretty well!"

"You may argue that it was lucky for him that the Hendersons were away at Bognor, although we know him to be equal to drugging an entire household to achieve his end. Joe Mortimer was too dark a horse to be trusted; we should have remembered that. Look at his record!"

Pennington screwed up his eyes and moved his head slowly up and down, smoking steadily all the time.

"He's a wily bird right enough," he admitted.

"The whole affair must have been planned from the start," I continued.

"Very probably."

"Joe getting drunk and being run-in with the knife and things in his possession. That was a clever move. His well-assumed horror, the talk about Chanda-Lung's eyes, the face at the window—It had us all guessing, Penn. You must admit that."

The man in the chair opposite was still nodding.

"I'm prepared to admit anything," he returned placidly. "I'm too confoundedly tired to argue. But doesn't it strike you as queer that it was Parsons who stopped behind with Mortimer? Any one of us might have stayed—"

"That was luck, too," I suggested. Pennington yawned.

"It smacks more to me like the long arm of coincidence. Chanda-Lung couldn't have foreseen that. No, Gray, I incline to the opinion that the use of Parsons's name as an intended victim was purely haphazard. The scheme was to wipe out one of us; it didn't matter which. That is just my opinion and we needn't bother ourselves to verify it.

"Our problem is solve the mystery of the Crimson Death. You noticed Mortimer's scarf? It was lined with sheet-rubber and the stitches had been ripped at one end when we found it. Whatever it was made those ghastly marks on Parsons's throat was concealed in there—and it was alive, Gray, all the time!"

I glanced at him uneasily.

"Alive?"

"I believe so. No man of Mortimer's class could simulate fear in the way he did this morning. He was mortally afraid, old son. Don't you see why? Because he knew that he carried something which, if carelessly handled, might recoil upon himself!"

"A snake," I suggested.

"I hardly think so."

I sat forward, a sudden thought striking me.

"Penn," I cried, "what do you suppose happened to the thing after it poisoned Parsons?"

He spread out his hands.

"Ask me another!"

"Mortimer wouldn't have taken it. He wouldn't have risked touching it with his hands—and he left his scarf behind on the floor."

"Which means—"

"That it may be here now!"

I got to my feet and moved about the room uneasily, surveying the cornices and the floor and every fold in the blue casement curtains, with Pennington, his feet on the mantelshelf, watching me.

And the longer I searched, the more

feasible my theory appeared. A thing that had lain unsuspected between the folds of a greasy scarf might have taken refuge anywhere.

I turned up the corner of the carpet gingerly and let it fall again, loosing into the atmosphere a faint cloud of dust; moved the golf-bag from the recess in which it now reposed and looked behind it; tried the underneath of each piece of furniture in turn.

V

NO luck?" inquired Pennington presently.

I shook my head.

Settling myself in my chair again, I surveyed him reproachfully.

"I've got to sleep in this place," I reminded him, "and you haven't!"

"Try leaving the light on!"

His superior smile annoyed me.

"What in the name of everything," I demanded, "is the use of that?"

"Every use in the world, if the brute's what I think it is."

"And supposing it isn't! What then? It bit Parsons in the daylight."

"Because it was thrown at him—and couldn't help it!"

He burst out laughing, and just at that moment the phone bell in the hall rang. I ran down and picked up the receiver. It was Hodges calling.

"That you, Mr. Gray?—Sergeant Hodges here. I've picked up Joe again—found him on the Batavia boat trying to ship for Holland. Put up a bit of a fight when I tackled him, but he's quieter now—"

"Hang on a minute," I answered, and called the news up to Pennington.

Pennington strolled out on to the landing.

"Tell him to slip the bracelets on him and bring him down here. We may as well get to the bottom of this. Joe Mortimer, with the gallows at the back of his mind, may prove more communicative than we found him this morning. In any case it's worth trying."

I gave the message to Hodges and went back.

It was ten minutes to eleven by the clock on the mantelpiece when a car drew up outside and a long ring at the bell announced the arrival of Hodges and his prisoner.

Joe entered first, propelled from the rear by his captor, who politely removed his hat for him—a gray velour this time, new and glossy. A change into a blue serge suit and collar and tie lent an air of respectability that the freckled face positively denied!

He paused just inside the door, his legs defiantly apart, the black eye gained in the struggle with Hodges painfully evident.

Pennington nodded to him from his chair.

"Well, Joe!" he greeted him. "Here again, I see!"

Mortimer scowled, but said nothing.

Watching Pennington, I saw the pupils of his eyes contract. The boyish expression had vanished completely; there appeared in its place a queer, set expression that reminded me somehow of Chanda-Lung, the only man in creation that I believe Mortimer feared.

"Two men died this morning," he rasped out, "and both in the same manner. You know that, Mortimer, don't you? You are being charged with both those crimes!"

The man with the sandy hair stiffened suddenly and his thin lips moved one over the other. I felt that we were being treated to a view of the real Mortimer now—the man who had started life in a London slum, learned boxing by fighting for his newspaper pitch, drifted on to the race courses and out to sea.

Fear had crept into those shifty eyes again, a subdued, sullen emotion that contrasted strangely with his shuddering terror of the morning. In his saner moments he had told us that he was not afraid of death.

I wondered if this threat of the gal-

lows would startle him—or whether he would decide to carry his story with him to another world.

Hodges had closed the door and was leaning against it, a little proud of his capture, more than anxious lest he should slip through his fingers again. A curtain fluttered in the cool breeze from an open window.

Mortimer's lips parted.

"I carried out my orders, guv'nor," he said huskily; "that's all."

"What was it you brought here in your scarf, Joe?"

The question rapped out like a pistol-shot, swift and deadly in its effect. It pierced Mortimer's armor of obstinate silence and sent him stumbling backward against the bag of clubs propped in a corner.

"I never brought nothing there, guv'nor," he gasped. "Straight I didn't." He clasped his manacled hands in front of him and stared in an agony of terror into the accusing eyes of Chinese Pennington.

I saw the beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead in big drops and a blue vein by his temple twitching. "It wasn't me," he moaned. "It was *'im* what done it—Chanda-Lung!"

In the brief silence that followed I sat upright in my chair, listening. On the heels of the accusation, as it were, I thought I heard a sound of vague movement in the passage outside.

Pennington's eyelids flickered.

"So it was Chanda-Lung himself who brought the Crimson Death here this morning?"

The other assented, but there was little conviction in his tone.

"Then how do you account for the fact that Inspector Parsons's last words to Mr. Gray were—*'It was in his scarf?'*"

Mortimer did not answer.

"What did you do with the Crimson Death, Joe?"

Still no reply.

Pennington had crossed his legs and

his long fingers were intertwined over his knee. He was speaking more slowly now, but every sentence he uttered carried a sting that went home.

"You didn't take it away with you, did you?"

Joe Mortimer gulped again. Compelled to reflect upon the mysterious *something* that his fear of the master-crook had forced him to carry and liberate, he began to show traces of increasing uneasiness. His eyes wandered around the room as mine had done, as if seeking something which he knew to be there.

I glanced at Pennington. He had gone queerly rigid. His hands clutched the arms of his chair and he was staring fixedly at my bag of golf-clubs away behind Mortimer.

I bent forward uneasily. I could have sworn I saw the bag move convulsively!

Pennington rose to his feet. I saw him draw his automatic and hold it behind him, and the other hand reach out for the switch.

"You have never heard of the *Scolopendra gigas*, I suppose, Mortimer?" he muttered between his teeth, never for one instant losing sight of the phenomenon in the corner.

"It is a peculiar insect—and singularly dangerous to man! It hates the light, you know, and slips away from it into the first convenient hiding place. In the dark, however, it comes out—particularly when hungry. Supposing we turn out the light, Joe!"

Joe Mortimer writhed horribly.

"No, guv'nor, no!" he bleated. "For Gawd's sake don't do that! It's 'ere, I tell you; it—"

The light went suddenly out. Pennington leaned across me, reaching down an electric torch from the mantelpiece. I heard him snick the catch with his thumbnail.

A pale circle of illumination fell upon the bag, and I caught my breath. Two long things, like feelers, were already waving above the leather bind-

ing. The waving ceased. Something long, glistening, infinitely revolting, writhed over the edge and dropped with a soft *plop* to the carpet.

I felt my heart pumping wildly. *It was an enormous crimson centipede, fully a foot in length!* For a moment it paused there, as if gaining its bearings—then shot forward with incredible rapidity toward Mortimer!

I clutched at the first thing that came to hand—a book—and darted across the room. It had swarmed up his trousers leg and the blood-curdling yell he had given when he saw it still echoed in my ears. He made a feeble effort to beat it off, then flopped against the wall, petrified with terror.

"Quick, Penn! The light!" I yelled.
"It may drop!"

The light came on, flooding the room and revealing the final stage of one of the most ghastly examples of poetic justice that I ever remember.

Drawn there apparently by uncanny instinct, the crimson scorpion encircled

Mortimer's throat like the green scarf that had once contained it!

From that day onward I preserved a great respect for Sergeant Hodges. With bare fingers only he plucked the writhing horror clear of his prisoner, dropped it to the carpet and obliterated it calmly with his boot!

By a merciful stroke of chance he was not bitten. Grinning in that queer way men do when death has missed them by inches, he caught Joe as he crumpled up.

The head went back as he laid him on the chesterfield, and for the third time that day we saw the chain of vivid crimson marks.

"The aluminium box, Gray," whispered Pennington in my ear. "On the chest-of-drawers in your bedroom."

I hurried out, and the significance of those movements in the passage dawned on me. The box of antidotes was gone. In its place, pinned to the chest by a slender knife, I saw the grim sign of the scorpion!



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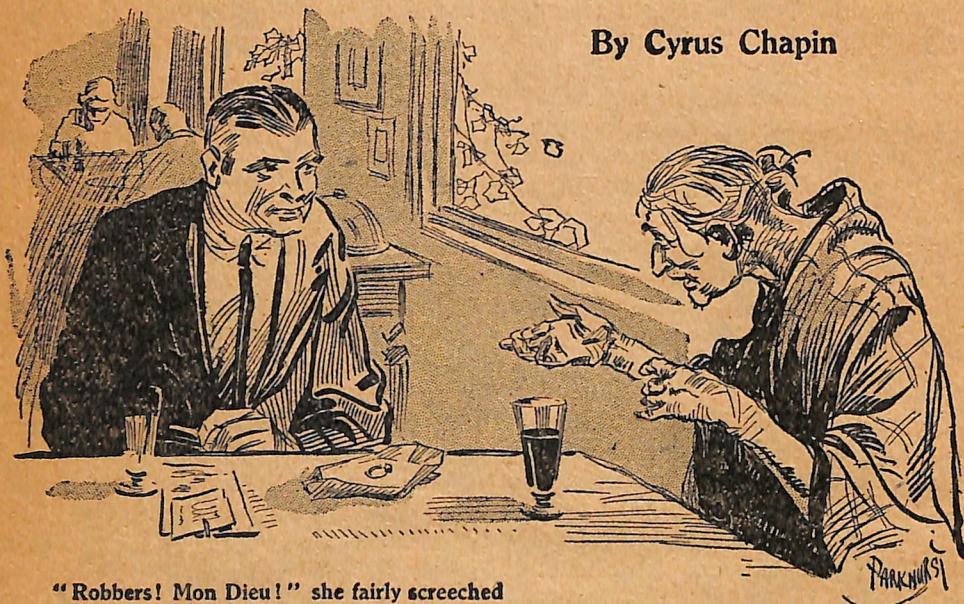
In "Tracked Down," the veteran Gray, redoubtable aid of Chinese Pennington, takes a taxi ride with the infamous emperor of crime himself.

And you can be sure it's exciting and mysterious.

In the Shadows of St. Roch

A True Story

By Cyrus Chapin



"Robbers! Mon Dieu!" she fairly screeched

*She Posed as an Humble Scrub Woman, But She Represented
a Ring of International Smugglers Who Dealt in Millions*

EVERY night I saw the old hag sitting in the window of Mme. Martin's café, between five and six as I went to my boarding-house for dinner. Sometimes I had an apéritif in the little café, and one night I asked *madame* who she was.

"She, *monsieur*?" replied *madame*, surprised at my interest. "I only know her as the scrub woman of St. Roch."

"You mean she scrubs along the Rue St. Roch?"

"No—no, *monsieur*, I mean she is the scrub woman for Monsieur le Curé at the church of St. Roch. She drops in here every night for her vermouth cassiss."

"Very good," I answered. "She seems a good-natured sort, and lone-

some. I'm going to invite her to have a drink with me. I see her glass is empty."

I did not tell Mme. Martin my real reasons for buying the old woman a drink. In fact, neither *madame* nor any one in Paris outside of the attachés of the *Préfet of Police*, and my own assistants in the secret service game, knew my actual official status as a criminal investigator from America.

I wanted a chance to look at the old woman's hands and size her up from a criminological standpoint, for even a novice at the game would have known from her face that she belonged to the habitual criminal type, or class of incorrigibles made famous by such anthropologists as Lombroso, Ferri, Bertillon, and Ellis.

I was particularly interested, not idly curious, in this specimen, because of the difficult, and, so far, extremely mysterious case which had brought me to Paris. Why should this ancient crook of the deepest possible dye be masquerading as an innocent scrubber of churches, such as the highly respectable Église de St. Roch?

I bowed to the old woman and she grinned and accepted a second drink with evident pleasure. She appeared a little surprised, but not suspicious. She simply took me for one of those very rich Americans who are likely to take a notion to do anything while romping around Paris.

Pierre's Chance

"It is kind of *monsieur* to notice a poor old woman like me," she began, sipping her drink. "I am nothing but the scrub woman of St. Roch. There are thousands of gay young girls in Paris for rich men like yourself. In fact I could tell you—"

She stopped, pretended to be distracted by something outside the window, then toyed with her glass. It was very evident she feared to finish whatever she had started to say.

As she slowly twirled the glass in her fingers, I had ample opportunity to observe her misshapen hands, and they were distinctly criminal down to the inordinately spatulate fingers.

Furthermore, she had the prominent cheek bones, receding forehead, heavy jaw and prominent incisors in the widely separated teeth that belonged to her particular type of crook.

To be perfectly candid and fair concerning myself, I must admit I did not then in any way connect this ancient crone with the Franco-American gang of jewel thieves and smugglers I was in France to try to catch and bring to justice.

My thought for the moment was that she was a more than ordinarily tough, old time delinquent who, for the time being, was escaping the efficient and

far-reaching eye of the French police, with whom I was constantly exchanging favors.

Perhaps I could do them a good turn, without jeopardizing my own work, the while.

The very day I met the old dame, a young man, Pierre Carnot, was recommended to me by one of our Embassy as a promising young cub who aspired to become a sure enough expert detective.

In my interview with Pierre I was impressed with his evident sincerity and the earnestness of purpose reflected in his snappy, black eyes. He was willing to work for nothing if I would only give him a chance to learn. He wanted particularly to work under me, so he might have a better chance of getting to America later in the same line of work.

In France all there was in view for him was a job as a gendarme. He was a Gascon French boy of twenty, hardy and tough as nails physically, with far more education and wit than the average lad of his age, regardless of country.

"Let's Meet Again"

Here was a chance for Pierre to learn while helping solve the mystery surrounding the scrub woman of St. Roch, for which work, as a matter of course, I would pay him a small wage and his expenses on the case.

Before the old woman and I left the café, I called her attention to the fact she had started to say something and had not finished.

"*Madame*," said I, "you were going to tell me there are thousands of gay girls in Paris for which rich men like me, and that you knew of—perhaps one—who would suit my fancy. Was that it?"

Old and ashen-hued though her features were, a flush of color actually mounted to her shrunken cheeks. But, for the instant she was silent, and as we stood there on the narrow sidewalk of

Rue St. Roch, she gnawed at her nails as though greatly embarrassed.

"Some other time, if you will, *monsieur*," she replied, her face crackling into a deprecatory grin. "I must first ask—of *mademoiselle*."

"Ah! Ha!" I answered, assuming a chuckle as though highly amused as well as intensely interested in the prospect. "I say, my good woman, be sure I am not disappointed. Let us meet again at this same place to-morrow night."

She nodded and grinned understandingly, and as I placed a few francs in her bony hand she hobbled off down St. Roch toward the church of that name on the corner of Rue St. Honoré.

The Famous Shadow

I had but to cross a short block to my pension at 29 Rue des Pyramides, where, from the fourth étage, the windows looked down upon Rue d'Argenteuil and St. Roch from the large, high ceilinged room filled with ancient but dependable antique furniture, where I slept and also made my headquarters when in Paris.

Waiting for me was my dependable assistant, Operative O. B. Hobbs, who had just finished a case in Spain and reported now for instructions on the work which had brought me to Paris. Hobbs was long, lean, lank and thirty-five, with the eye of a hawk and the beak of an eagle.

In the world-wide International Police and Detective Organization to which we were attached he was known as the best shadow among all of our thousands of operatives. And, though shadowing is considered generally as the most onerous of any branch of detective work, very strangely, Hobbs liked to shadow and never lost his man.

He had an almost uncanny ability in the way of disappearing and reappearing in the most unexpected way and in the most unexpected places when on this work. Besides being a clever shadow he was an excellent all round

detective, with good judgment and plenty of well directed nerve. The first thing to do was to explain to Hobbs something about the work we were in Paris to perform.

"The Maiden Lane jewel merchants of New York," I began, "are, as you know, all members of the Jewelers' Security Alliance, but there is a scurvy outfit with headquarters on the Bowery who call themselves the Jewelers' Exchange."

"I know 'em," replied Hobbs. "Receivers of stolen goods."

"Right," I responded, "though, according to the ethics of the criminal profession, I presume we may speak of them as smugglers."

Hobbs smiled at this, for the Bowery Jewelers' Exchange were known in inner police circles the world over as a slippery, tricky bunch, hard to catch and harder to handle, even after being caught, which they were at times, with "the goods on."

A Crooked End

"In this case," I continued, "the Maiden Lane crowd are our clients. A bunch of diamonds, pearls and all kinds of jewels, set and unset, are reaching this country from France and a few other points in Europe without being declared to our customs service. That means, of course, they are being smuggled into the country."

"As we know, there is more or less of this sort of thing going on in a small way through small channels, ordinary passengers on steamships who think it funny to beat their own country out of what rightfully belongs to them. But here we have to deal with this jewel smuggling proposition on a truly huge scale."

"This Bowery exchange have been and are right now receiving the stuff. They have agents in Paris, Antwerp and other places. The better class of jewelers, say, for example, along the Rue de la Paix in Paris, are, comparatively speaking, straight."

"Even where they are not so, they have to come to America in order to be arrested on any such charge as smuggling into our country. But we are not interested in the merchant end of it right now. What we are interested in is the crook end of it."

"The crook end of it?" repeated Hobbs, all interest and keen as a blood-hound to take up his part of the work at once.

"Yes," I went on, "I mean, a gang of crooks are operating in Paris, getting hold of all kinds of jewels, by one means and another, all having to do with thievery of course, and getting the swag through this Jewelers' Exchange on the Bowery."

"Apaches?" questioned Hobbs.

On the Marne Banks

"Perhaps," I answered. "At any rate, coincident with the jewels reaching America through the Bowery exchange, which the Maiden Lane merchants rightfully want to put out of business, the French police are having a tremendous lot of trouble over jewel thefts at social functions.

"A necklace or a tiara, for instance, will be lifted from some guest and disappear instantly as if by magic. The *préfet* suspects some society man or woman—some fraud or poser no doubt—is nabbing the stuff and slipping it out of the various houses where these thefts occur to confederates waiting outside. This may be done by tossing valuable articles out of windows or off of balconies to whoever happens to be waiting for them.

"And, mark this, in several instances all the guests have been lined up and searched in the good old-fashioned way, without the slightest clew being derived from these methods."

"So," grinned Hobbs, "I suppose, as usual, *all* we have to do is—catch the thieves."

I shook my head. "No—for in this particular case we must proceed a step farther. Besides catching the crooks

or assisting the French authorities to do so, our most important work will be to find out who is smuggling this stuff through to America. Our fine old Customs Service will be only too willing to do the rest."

The first thing I did was to send my assistant, Hobbs, to an Apache hang-out in an old stone hotel and café on the banks of the famous river Marne, in the forest of Vincennes.

Hobbs, as well as myself, was aware the Apaches do not live in Paris. They live in and around the forest of Vincennes and dash into Paris and back again to their hovels and dives, after some depredation or other.

When on some all-night job, or when it suits their purposes, they spend all night in Paris, but practically none of them live there, notwithstanding the numerous fake Apache joints in the Montmartre made up especially to lure sensation seeking tourists.

Speaking French like an educated continental, and possessed of a composite personality which made it difficult for one unacquainted with the man to place him as to his nationality or profession, if any, Hobbs was not the sort of man to be suspected of being anything like a detective or an officer of the law.

At Mme. Martin's Café

Furthermore, the manager of the dive, one François, was under obligations to me for having saved him from serious trouble with the French authorities following the war when, to save his own hide, he had "peached" on some of his own kind.

If Hobbs could pick up any information around the Apache rendezvous that would be of value to our investigation, so much the better.

Meanwhile, I spent some hours tutoring my young protégé, Pierre Carnot, in the subtle art of shadowing. To shadow the aged crone now posing as the scrub woman of St. Roch, should be an easy task for a beginner.

She hobbled along at a slow pace, and barring the possibility of her being suspicious of a shadow which would cause her to keep a sharp lookout to see if she was being watched, the job presented but few difficulties. Pierre would shadow the old hag from Mme. Martin's café on St. Roch, after her second meeting with myself, provided she kept the appointment.

I was considerably gratified to find the old woman, on the evening in question, sitting at the little table by the window, sipping her evening apéritif as usual.

"*Bon jour, monsieur,*" grinned the old vixen as I approached her table, signaling the garçon to bring us a couple of drinks.

An Interesting Report

"*Bon jour, madame,*" I returned, sitting down opposite her, "I trust you are not fatigued after your day's work."

"Ah!" she replied. "It makes but little difference, for one of my age must work hard to keep flesh and body together."

"And—I suppose you have good news for me—yes? Did your *mademoiselle* agree to a rendezvous with me?"

"Alas, *monsieur*," replied the old woman with a shrug of her shoulders, "she was not in a good humor when I spoke to her about you. All I could get out of her was, 'perhaps—some day.'"

"Too bad," I returned, appearing much chagrined, "I'm curious to meet her. Fix it up if you can—do your best."

With this I assumed again to play the rich American and shoved a few francs across the table toward her. Followed profuse thanks for my generosity. I questioned her as adroitly as possible as to where *mademoiselle* lived, to which she would only reply that she lived on the other side of the Seine—"the left bank," that is.

As to her own place of residence, I took it for granted she must room in some attic close to the establishment of the curé of St. Roch. In this I was mistaken, for inside of two hours after I told her good night at the entrance of the café, Pierre Carnot had some interesting things to report.

I was seated at my piano in the boarding house at 29 rue des Pyramides when he knocked at my door. As he entered his eyes were alive with interest and excitement.

"*Monsieur!*" he exclaimed. "I have the honor to report that the old scrub woman of St. Roch walked south from the Café Martin, along rue St. Roch to the Rivoli. From the Jeanne d'Arc statue she continued south along the rue des Tuilleries, crossed the Seine on the Pont Royal, thence along rue du Bac to rue de l'Université, then west to the rue de Poitiers, where she entered a new apartment house at No. 10.

Trailing a Young Lady

"I watched from a café diagonally across the street, and an hour and ten minutes after she entered the place she came out bareheaded and hailed a taxi from the rue l'Université. As she stood close to the entrance of the building, a most lovely young woman, dressed in the height of fashion, came out, and after a few words with the old woman, who is evidently her servant, the taxi drove away with the young woman.

"The old woman looked after the departing taxi a moment, then shook her head as though dissatisfied about something, then reentered the building. I thought it best to report this to you, and await your further instructions."

"Good work for a beginner, Pierre," I assured him. "I know the locality of which you speak. You will go to the Hotel de l'Intendance and rent a room from which you will be able to observe the apartment house in question. If I am not mistaken you will

find a garden in the rear of the apartment house, which backs up against the de l'Intendance.

"Here is some money on account of your expenses. You will drop the shadow of the old woman and take up the shadow of the young lady, who is probably, as you suspect, her mistress.

"If she uses a taxi, naturally it will be necessary for you to use one; if she walks, as a matter of course, you will walk. Use your best judgment, and report to me by phone, letter, or in person as occasion permits."

The Gay Life

"A hunch" appears to be little short of an inspiration.

As soon as young Pierre Carnot reported the result of his first two hours' work to me, I had one of those indefinable "hunches" that the young woman whom he described as lovely, was a criminal who would well bear watching.

Further, I believed it quite possible she was in some way or other connected with the jewel robberies which were then going on in certain of the exclusive social strata of Paris. I immediately instructed Operative Hobbs to also move to the de l'Intendance, and detailed two operatives to assist himself and Pierre in the shadowing of the young *mademoiselle*.

In addition to this Hobbs, and the two operatives, Weems and Kipling, would secure whatever information it was possible to get that might be of value to the case.

Three days after these instructions were given out, Hobbs reported to me that the young woman often used a private automobile driven by a French chauffeur who appeared to be in her employ. Besides this she often used the public taxicabs of the city.

She came and went between the apartment house and several of the old homes belonging to the aristocracy of the St. Germain, as well as certain pretentious establishments on Boulevard

Malesherbes. These were principally calls made during the afternoons.

Mornings she would sometimes drive to the Bois Boulogne, where she would meet a crowd of young people and go horseback riding with them. Occasionally she visited shops along the rue de la Paix, Boulevard des Capucines and Madeleine, as well as the Galleries Lafayette and Printemps, but in these visits there was nothing suspicious to be noted.

She simply shopped and spent money freely the same as any wealthy young society woman might do. That she belonged to the exclusive social set of the old régime in Paris there could be no doubt, but so far there had been no receptions, balls, or evening parties given, since the shadow on her had been in operation.

Young Pierre Carnot's room was located where he could observe her occasionally moving about the small garden and walled courtyard to the rear of her apartment house.

Buying a Diamond

The old woman of St. Roch came and went between the old church of St. Roch, the café of Mme. Martin, and the apartment house where she was evidently some kind of servant to the young *mademoiselle*, but for a while nothing out of the way occurred in her actions. Perhaps after all, she was but adding to a slender income by acting as a maid of all work to the younger woman.

From Pierre's room at the de l'Intendance I had ample opportunity to observe the young *mademoiselle*, and, judging from what could be seen from that distance, I thought her to be not more than twenty-five years of age, and unusually graceful and good-looking.

Occasionally she had callers who drove up in expensive equipages. Pierre Carnot found out that her name was Jeanne Bizot. The name did not appear near the entrance, so Pierre suc-

ceeded in getting the information from a near-by café keeper, also that the young woman was supposed to be very rich, with many rich friends. She was said to be the orphan of wealthy parents.

I purchased a one-karat diamond ring in the Clichy district, close to Pigalle, at a bargain. It stood me approximately three thousand seven hundred and fifty francs, or close to one hundred and fifty dollars. This was in preparation of forcing a meeting with Mlle. Jeanne Bizot, through the old scrub woman of St. Roch or otherwise.

Underhanded Business

The ring I had purchased, as a matter of fact, would cost between four and five hundred dollars in expensive shops along the rue de la Paix.

The week before Christmas it had been cold and rainy, with an occasional flurry of snow. On a Friday evening it turned warmer, and I judged, from the shadow reports of my operatives, Mlle. Jeanne would be apt to take a stroll in the evening, after dinner, accompanied as usual by the old woman.

On my way to my boarding house for dinner, I noticed the old hag, sitting as usual at the table in the window of the Café Martin on rue St. Roch. And, as usual, I stepped in, bade her good evening, and bought her the customary apéritif.

Seated at the table, sipping our drinks, I casually remarked that I had purchased a diamond ring during the afternoon at what I considered a bargain for such a beauty. Her old eyes lit up with curiosity and greed as I produced the gem for her inspection.

"And," questioned she, "how much did *monsieur* pay for it?"

"Twelve thousand francs," I answered indifferently, "and I intend to buy some more—"

"What?" she fairly screeched, "twelve thousand francs? Robbers! *Canaille!* And you are about to allow

them to fleece you again?" She gestured with her hands imploringly.

"*Mon Dieu!* This is too much. To see a fine gentleman like yourself robbed before my eyes. *Monsieur*, I pray you to buy no more jewels until I see you again. The fact is, I have a friend—"

She put a finger to her lips and looked cautiously around at the various patrons of the bar who were paying no attention to us.

"The fact is," she repeated, "I have a friend—and I will see her—see him, this very night, and meet you here tomorrow evening with some good news."

I appeared not to be particularly interested. In fact, I assumed a little temper for the occasion.

"Huh!" said I, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You were going to fix it for me to meet your *mademoiselle*, whoever she is, and nothing came of it. Now you say you have a friend, some mysterious friend whom you will see before I buy any more jewels.

Greeting the Mistress

"Very well, I shall trust you once more, and that will be the finish unless you produce something, some one out of all this mystery." At this juncture I laughed as though to put her in a good humor.

"Another thing," I continued, "it draws close to Noël. There is barely time now to get presents to America. So if you know of any snaps in the jewelry line, get busy."

"I'm sorry," returned the old hag, "*monsieur* will understand later, it is not my fault, these delays."

After dinner, I strolled across the Place de la Concorde to the commencement of the Champs Élysées, with young Pierre Carnot following me in case I needed him. Operative Hobbs had already got word to me that Mlle. Jeanne and the old woman were walking along the Champs in the direction of Place de l'Étoile.

I soon spotted the pair and walked directly toward them. The old woman began bowing when she saw me and was evidently telling her mistress who I was. As I came closer to them I stopped and there was nothing the old crone could do but introduce me to *mademoiselle*, who smiled and shook hands agreeably enough.

She was not only pretty but beautiful, probably five feet six in height and of the Norman French type, with light brown hair and dark blue eyes.

Her charming smile displayed rows of small, white, even teeth and in spite of her beauty it was easy enough to perceive she apparently lacked vanity.

A Close Tongue

Mademoiselle accepted my invitation to go to some café in the neighborhood and have some refreshments. At a signal from her mistress, the aged crone hobbled away, and we soon found a place that appeared satisfactory, on rue St. Honoré close by Avenue de Marigny. I noticed my companion rather insisted on a certain table and preferred to sit facing the entrance.

"A pet idiosyncrasy of mine, *monsieur*," she smiled. "I do not like to sit with my back to the door of a café. I—don't know exactly why."

I had the feeling her eyes were sizing me up from top to bottom. From what followed it was apparent she had decided I was all right and to be trusted, with certain reservations.

"The old woman, Margot, was telling me you wanted to buy some jewels," she began, smiling good-naturedly, "and I thought perhaps if you desired it so, I might help you."

"I would be delighted if you did," I responded, taking the ring I had shown Margot from my pocket and handing it to her. As the waiter served us, she looked it over with considerable care.

"Very good," said my companion, "only the price of twelve thousand francs was entirely too much. I am

afraid you Americans often get the worst of it here in Paris. Let me tell you a little something about myself, for it has to do with what may follow.

"I am an orphan and enjoy a small income, but it is not enough for a girl of my rather expensive tastes. So, instead of going into business, running a lingerie shop or some such nonsense, I add to my income quite a little by dealing in jewelry of various sorts—principally in precious stones.

"Of course, this is a secret from my friends of the St. Germain crowd and others. They might approve and they also might not.

"At any rate, I take no chances on that score. Now, if you can keep a close tongue in your mouth I can get you all the diamonds, pearls, emeralds and even rubies that you might want, for say a quarter of the regular price."

I must retain the rôle I had assumed of the extravagantly rich American, and yet one who was not quite a fool with his money.

Beating the Duty

"Of course," said I, "even when one considers spending a considerable sum on such baubles, one must be careful. In the case of this ring, I must confess I was hasty. I'm not usually so. I've been having quite a little fling in Paris, and thought twelve thousand francs for a little ring, comparatively speaking, did not count for much.

"I understand perfectly all you have said about your income and your station in life and in society. Of course, I am not counting on buying a great lot of stuff, but if you can put me on the track of some real bargains I will be very glad to consider buying from you or through you as the case may be. The matter of the duty—the ad valorem—"

"Oh, as to that"—she laughed merrily—"there are various ways of getting around that. I happen to know several of them. Every one does it, you know, I mean beats the duty."

She returned the ring to me and sipped at the champagne I had ordered. Meanwhile she was taking most thorough stock of myself.

Then, as if taking a sudden determination, she reached down under the table, as though perhaps adjusting her skirt or stocking, and brought forth a bracelet of diamonds and emeralds, by far the most elaborate piece of jewelry of its kind I had ever seen.

As it lay on the table between us I glanced around as though fearful some of the habitués of the place might see it and suspect something.

A Pile of Francs

"Never mind them, *monsieur*," said she, laughing gayly, "even if any one noticed it they would swear it must be paste. But—it is distinctly not. It is the real thing. Its original value—its value right now for the matter of that, is close to ten thousand dollars American money, say two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

She shrugged her shoulders very prettily and accepted one of my cigarettes with the utmost *sang-froid*. "And that, my dear *monsieur*, is but a sample of what I have to offer." Again she laughed, then, "I talk like a shopkeeper, do I not? In fact, I speak as one of the *petit bourgeoisie*?"

"Not at all," I responded, as her laughter died away into a fascinating ripple. "Hardly that. If anything, you are certainly an aristocrat, *mademoiselle*."

"Thank you," she responded, nodding, "but, as I say, I can manage to get you what you want in the way of jewels, set or unset, much cheaper than you can get them yourself. You see, I have access to certain channels, certain dealers we will call them, and, well, I can get them.

"Now, this bracelet you may have for—let me see—well, I will let you have it for fifty thousand francs, two thousand dollars in American money."

I was prepared for just such a con-

tingency as this. I knew the bracelet was worth, even at a quick sale, anywhere in the world, as much as she asked me for it. The clients of our International Police and Detective Organization would be very glad to get hold of such a treasure as this for twice the price, and the original owner, assuming it had been stolen, as I believed, would be glad to redeem it. And if not, it fitted in with my plans to make the purchase anyway.

Consequently without further delay, and without the slightest hesitancy I drew forth a fat wallet from an inside pocket and counted out the money. As I shoved the pile of francs to her across the table and pocketed the bracelet, she smiled and held out her hand.

"I see, *monsieur*," said the girl, "that you are a man after my own heart. And—I can tell by the look in your eyes, that you are no man's fool or woman's either. You know jewels when you see them. I could tell that by the way you inspected the bracelet.

Money that Talked

"You saw every stone in it in the space of a minute. Perhaps, after all, *monsieur* is one of those American jewelers over here looking for just such bargains as this?"

"No," I responded, "I am not a jeweler, nor do I claim to be an expert, so-called. I do know something of jewels, yes, enough to know the bracelet is not a bad buy at the price. Of course I'm asking no questions as to how you got hold of it; fact is, I don't care."

"By rights, I should have some qualified connoisseur go over this bracelet with a powerful glass, but I'm taking a chance on your playing square with me and on my own snap judgment. That's all."

"Now, listen, young lady—I want you to arrange to get together all of this junk you have or can find and let me look at it and perhaps bring a friend of mine along who is in a way better qualified than I to pass on the stones. You

can surely have no objection to that. He is as dumb as an oyster when it comes to talking."

Without waiting for her to answer and realizing this was a good time to press the point, "You arrange to do what I say as soon as possible. And then—it may be I will want you to show me how to outwit the customs officials on the United States end of this proposition. You understand?"

"Perfectly," answered the girl quick as a flash. The possession of the money cash in hand had put her in an excellent humor. Money after all does talk.

The Mysterious Theft

"There is no time like the present. Meet me—let me see—" She paused an instant as though debating something in her mind. "Meet me—at my apartment, No. 10 Rue de Poitiers. Ask the concierge to show you my suite.

"And—if agreeable to you, *monsieur*, let us make the hour—midnight. That will be easy to remember. Midnight sharp. We will have a little trip to make. I will furnish the automobile."

"Agreed," I replied, "and it is all right for me to bring my friend the jewel expert and connoisseur?"

"As you will, *monsieur*," smiled the girl. "You have trusted me. I shall now proceed to trust you—to the limit. But remember—in these purchases you make of me no one must know of the transactions but you.

"For you must know, my friend, the authorities, the office of the *Sûreté Générale* of France and of the *Préfet* of Police of Paris, they are all what we may call—extremely—nosey."

We walked together to *mademoiselle's* quarters on rue de Poitiers where I left her. As soon as I was safely around a corner on rue du Bac I signaled Hobbs, using the same thin, shrill whistle made with tongue and teeth he knew so well—and difficult to place for one unaccustomed to it.

When Hobbs joined me I gave him certain instructions for the night's work, which he was to pass on to the boy Pierre and the rest of my operatives. I then drove directly to M. Payon's home on rue Merceau and showed him the bracelet.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the police official, "it is the identical bracelet that was stolen from the Comtesse Landres a fortnight ago. The theft occurred under the most mysterious circumstances at a ball given at the Belgian embassy. *Monsieur*, I have the honor to salute you as clever. Consider myself and staff under your orders."

It was then quickly arranged between us that he should pose as the jewel expert and connoisseur on the trip *mademoiselle* had said we would be called upon to make. The chauffeur would be one of his picked men. After some further discussion as to details, we arranged to meet at Mlle. Bizot's apartment at midnight.

A Dangerous Den

Exactly on the stroke of the hour M. Payon and myself ascended in the lift to the girl's apartment and rapped on the door. It was opened by the old hag. The girl was dressed ready to go out. She was apparently at her ease in the presence of M. Payon who looked the part he was prepared to play and nothing more than that.

He was a small, dark, wiry little man with a Vandyke beard and glasses, quite scholarly in appearance. I introduced him as M. Potin. I was known to her as Frederic Chapman.

The girl wore a light tan, short outer coat, trimmed with beaver, and a jaunty cap to match, all distinctly *à la mode*. She carried a hand bag which I surmised contained a pistol.

As we started downstairs she unbuttoned her coat and snapped the bag onto a neat leather belt she wore around the waist of her suit, which was apparently of a very dark-blue cheviot. She looked stunning, to say

the least. We were ready to start, and as we stepped into the private limousine which evidently belonged to her she gave her chauffeur an address that astounded me for a moment.

"François's place on the Marne—you know."

"*Oui—oui—mademoiselle,*" replied the chauffeur quickly, snapping to a salute.

François's place on the Marne, in the edge of the forest of Vincennes, was the very Apache hangout to which I had recently sent Hobbs for possible information. A dangerous den of murderous and thieving rogues—one of the toughest caldrons of iniquity to be found within the realms of crookdom!

Ready for Action

A veritable canakin of the barbarous, half civilized, untamable Apache; and yet François—bullet-headed, beady-eyed, serpent-faced François—had sworn he was my friend when I had saved him once from the all-devouring maw of the criminal law machine in France.

By one thirty o'clock M. Payon and myself sat opposite Mlle. Jeanne Bizot at a table in a back room of François's dive on the Marne. A door, now closed, opened into the main room of the café.

A curtain was drawn over the single window which looked out into the garden. A single greasy oil lamp stood in the center of the oilcloth-covered table.

On either side of mademoiselle, in strange contrast to her almost *spirituelle* beauty, were two of the vilest-looking Apaches I, in all my experiences with criminals, had ever seen. Standing back of the trio was another male member of the gang.

Spread before us on the table was an array of necklaces, bracelets, rings, tiaras and brooches that truly represented a king's ransom and no mistake. M. Payon was busy with a "*loupe*" in one eye, and a heavy lensed hand-glass microscope by his right hand.

The girl was strangely silent. Perhaps she had some kind of premonition a "pinch" was in the wind, perhaps her intuitive cunning only gave her a sense of doubt that all was not well.

The loot before her represented her accumulated wealth as well as the stuff her three confederates had brought along with them, to sell, if possible, to myself, the rich American.

I left Payon alone with the quartet a moment, while I stepped out and into the bar to survey the vantage of the ground. A look passed between François and myself, which meant the fun was about to begin. And as far as he and his ill-visaged woman companion, who stood beside him, were concerned, the silent message of our eyes meant it must be a case of hands off.

François knew at least some of the several strange men who moved about the place must be there to protect and assist me, if necessary. None of the other forty-odd Apaches, men and women, in the dive were wise to this.

A Raging Female

Back in the little room again, I closed the door and again took my seat beside M. Payon. I pressed my knee against his, which was the signal for action. Simultaneously we whipped out a pistol each and, rising quickly from our chairs, leveled them at the four crooks before us.

"Up with your hands!" I commanded.

A noise resembling a low cry came from the throat of the girl, and as the hands of the four started upward there came a smash as the Apache on her left managed to sweep the lamp from the table, leaving the room in total darkness.

M. Payon and I were prepared for some such move as this, and were determined to spare the life of the girl. If her confederates were killed it made no difference.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Four

shots rang out, thundering in the close confines of the narrow space. Two belched from the guns of the enemy and two from the pistol of M. Payon. I sprang to the door and grabbed the girl as Payon ducked downward behind the table.

The smashing of the window followed, and as two of the men attempted a get-away in that direction they were caught by Hobbs, Pierre and Weems.

The girl raved; cursed and bit at me to no avail; excepting for a slight cut across the back of one of my hands, from a knife she carried, I was not scratched. Finally she ceased struggling and confined herself to reviling me unmercifully.

As my operative Kuplung and two of M. Payon's men opened the door, a flash light revealed the body of one of the Apaches lying on the floor, bleeding from a gun wound in the neck.

Outside, in the main room, Payon's reserves had herded the entire crowd of Apaches, men and women, into the corner of the pool room. François and his woman stood behind the bar shackled together with an officer on guard.

The girl and the three Apaches who had been in with her on the swag were the only ones we wanted. François and his companion were liberated immediately, and after we had safely departed with our prisoners, including the wounded man, the crowd in the pool room were allowed to go free.

M. Payon took charge of the loot.

It was prearranged between Payon and myself that I should accompany *mademoiselle* in her limousine, Operative Hobbs driving, as we made our way toward the Palais de Justice, where we arrived shortly after daylight. For a wonder she was quiet. Finally she spoke.

"I am a fool!" said she. "I suppose this means twenty years in Saint Lazare for me—or does it? After all,

I cannot help but feel you are a gentleman. I was a good girl, and I fell—that's all. I intended to pay it all back. What can I do, *monsieur*?"

"Confess all to M. Payon and myself, and give us the names of the conspirators who are smuggling the jewels.

"You may think this is dishonorable, but you are not by nature a thief.

"These Apaches are. They are habitual, born, dyed-in-the-blood criminals, and never will be anything else. They will be punished anyway. But it will simply make it easier to convict them if you help us."

After some days of thought in prison, she consented to follow my advice.

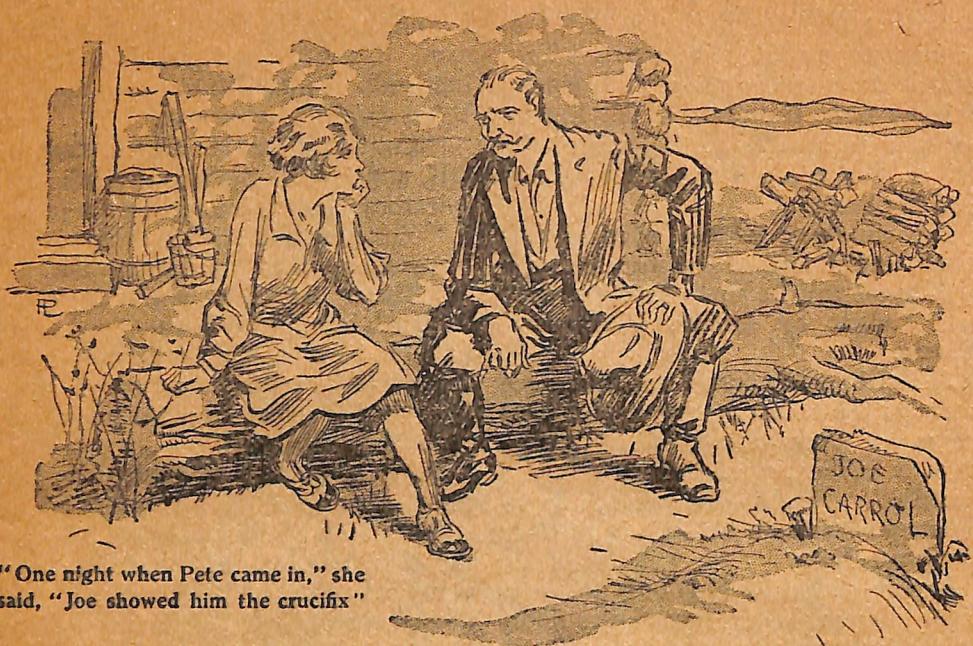
The result of this was that her three Apache accomplices, including the wounded one, who recovered, were tried, convicted and sentenced to serve fifteen years each.

And more important to me was the fact that she made it possible for our International Police and Detective Organization to assist the United States Customs service in arresting and convicting a man and his wife who were doing most of the "go-between" smuggling work between the Paris crooks and the Jewelers' Exchange on the Bowery.

These two malefactors, including one of the principal members of the fake Bowery exchange, received eight years each in Atlanta.

Six months after these cases were all finished and I was back in Paris on some other work, I came across the old scrub woman of St. Roch, nor did she seem inclined to avoid me. We met early one morning in the great market of the Halles. I asked her what she was doing, and if she was still the scrub woman at St. Roch.

"Ah, no, *monsieur*," said she. "You see, I was working there as an excuse and to enable me to come across rich visitors like yourself. Now *mademoiselle* and I are very good. She runs a small shop on the rue St. Honoré, and will be overjoyed if you will visit us."



"One night when Pete came in," she said, "Joe showed him the crucifix"

The Crucifix

The Simple Strategy of a Country Sheriff Reveals the Miracle of Cabaret Joe's Charmed Life

By Richard Keith

IT certainly promised to be a dull day for Sheriff Bob McKenzie. At nine o'clock that morning he took a bootlegger to the district court to be arraigned; between nine-thirty and ten he read last night's Lakewood *Camera*, and after that he went to the post office for the mail, stopping at Harry Dennett's drug store on his way back for his morning pick-me-up of cherry phosphate.

But now, back in his office in the county courthouse, his big feet cocked on his roll top desk, the sheriff was not sure that the day would be so dull after all. In fact quite the opposite. He pondered long and carefully over a letter and some official-looking papers

before he tucked them in his pocket and dropped his feet to the floor.

"Neil!" he called.

Neil Blum, the sheriff's chief deputy, appeared in the doorway smoking a cigarette.

"Yes, Bob," he drawled.

"I've got to go to Caribou."

"That so?"

"Yup. If Jim Vivian comes in, tell him we'll draw that venire as soon as I get back."

"All right, Bob."

Sheriff McKenzie clapped his slouch hat on his gray head, lighted a cigar and strolled down the courthouse steps to his car, parked under the gnarled old cottonwood tree that spread its

drooping branches over the main street of a little Western town.

He peered up at the blue sky, exhaled a cloud of cigar smoke and waved to a man who stood picking his teeth in a restaurant doorway across the street.

"You can't beat a Colorado spring, Louie!" he shouted.

"Ain't you right, Bob," came a nasal guffaw.

The burly sheriff smiled and, climbing into his car, drove slowly along the main street of the county seat until he came to the mouth of a narrow cañon bordered on both sides by overhanging red sandstone cliffs, and, farther back and higher up on the sloping foothills were blue-black spruce trees and prickly pear shrubs. He stepped on the gas and his car shot up the steep cañon road.

An hour later he stopped his car on a hill that ran through the once populous but now desolate and almost deserted mining camp of Caribou. The camp, once the mecca for thousands of fortune hunters, gamblers and adventurers, at present boasted only a few dozen rattletrap frame houses, a pool hall, garage, and a general store.

The sheriff placed a rock under his right rear tire, entered the general store and took the proprietor, a thin, sandy-haired man, behind an iron grating marked "Post Office." There he talked while the proprietor listened attentively, nodding his head at intervals.

"Yep, Bob," he said gravely when the sheriff had finished. "They're livin' in Eben Teal's cabin across the creek."

Sheriff McKenzie gave the store-keeper a cigar and trudged up to the crest of Caribou Hill. There, easily visible to any one who might chance to be in the valley below, he lighted another cigar and glanced down at a cabin in a clearing on the far side of a narrow creek.

He studied the cabin a minute or two, then dropped down a rocky trail, crossed a pine log bridge over the creek

and, walking up to the cabin in the clearing, knocked on the door.

A wisp of a girl not over twenty-one, white-faced and red-lipped, opened the door and looked up at the sheriff. Immediately she took a handkerchief from the sleeve of her shabby gray silk dress and dabbed at her eyes. The sheriff removed his hat.

"Mrs. Joe Carrol?" he asked politely.

The girl nodded.

"Sorry," said Bob McKenzie, "but I'm the county sheriff and I—"

The girl did not wait for the sheriff to finish. She seized him by the arm and led him around back of the cabin to a mound of fresh earth, at one end of which stood a pine slab inscribed "Joe Carrol." She sank down on her knees beside the mound and sobbed hysterically.

"Joe's dead!" she wailed. "Joe's dead!"

Sheriff McKenzie, hat in hand, stared at the newly-made grave a few moments, then, his blue eyes somber, he raised the girl to her feet and led her to a pine log a few feet from the grave, where he sat beside her in the brilliant mountain sunshine.

"I'm sorry," he said apologetically.

The girl dried her eyes.

"It ain't your fault," she sighed brokenly. "It's them Chicago bulls. I knew they'd be after Joe."

She looked at the grave.

"Let them get him now," she added resignedly.

The sheriff puffed his cigar.

"How did Joe get mixed up in that Chicago affair?" he asked.

The girl brushed her black bobbed hair out of her eyes.

"It was over a crucifix," she replied soberly.

"A crucifix?"

"Yuh. You know—one o' them crosses Christ is nailed to."

She turned to the sheriff.

"Ever been in Pete Mongone's cabaret on State Street?" she asked.

The sheriff shook his head.

"I ain't been around Chicago much," he admitted.

The girl's lips came together in a straight line.

"You ain't missed much," she remarked moodily. She studied the ground. "Anyways," she went on, "me and Joe Carrol done a double hoofin' turn at Pete Mongone's cabaret before we was married. After we was married I quit and Joe worked alone."

She squeezed her handkerchief into a tiny ball.

"We had a baby," she said dully, "but he died. Then Joe got sick and I had to go to work in Pete Mongone's again. I got thirty a week for a single, and I thought we could get by on that until Joe got better. Only he didn't get better. He got worse. The doctor said it was his lungs. On top o' that—"

Her lips quivered.

"Pete Mongone begun gettin' fresh," she continued with an effort. "I told him where to head in, but I couldn't ride him too hard, because if I did I knew he'd fire me. He took me home every night after the cabaret closed, and when I wouldn't stand in the hallway with him he started comin' into the flat with me."

The girl looked up at the sheriff.

"What could I do?" she asked helplessly. "If I locked him out he'd have canned me, so I had to let him in. He came in nearly every night, and whenever Joe was awake he used to go into the bedroom and kid him. That was how Pete got wise to Joe's crucifix."

She folded her wet handkerchief on her knee and stared straight ahead at a thick grove of pine trees about fifty yards away.

II

WHEN Joe was a kid," she said, "his mother gave him a crucifix. She told him as long as he kept it everything would be jake, so even though Joe got sicker and sicker he

thought he wouldn't die as long as he had that crucifix.

"The doctor told him he was slippin', but Joe only laughed at him. He kept his crucifix under his pillow all the time, and one night when Pete Mongone came into the bedroom he showed it to him.

"I won't croak as long as I have that, Pete," he says.

"Well, Pete falls for all Joe tells him about that crucifix.

"The next thing I knew Pete starts rushin' me harder'n ever. I can't shake him because I'm afraid o' losin' my job, but Pete don't get that through his thick head. Because I'm halfway decent to him, he thinks I'm in love with him!"

Mrs. Joe Carrol's lip curled.

"Me in love with him!" she jeered. "Feature it! But Pete Mongone thinks I am and, worse and more of it, he thinks I'll marry him if Joe dies. He even has the nerve to tell me so!"

The cabaret girl bit her lip, and Sheriff McKenzie followed her steady gaze to the clean, fragrant pine grove far from Pete Mongone's State Street cabaret. She seemed lost in a reverie as the wind sighed in the pines and a blackbird trilled from the top of a quaking asp back of the cabin.

"I wouldn't have married Pete on a bet," she went on, "but he was too dumb to know that, and all the time he nearly drives me nuts askin' me to marry him if Joe dies.

"At last one night, just to keep him quiet, I said I would, and when he comes into the flat with me the first thing he does is peek into Joe's bedroom. Joe is asleep. Pete hands me a bottle o' hooch.

"Fix me up a drink, Maisie," he says.

"I goes into the kitchen to fix him a drink, but I ain't no more'n got the ginger ale poured when I hears a shot. I drops the bottle and runs into the bedroom. Pete Mongone is layin' on the floor and Joe is standin' over him with

a gun. I jumps at Joe, but he pushes me away, bends over Pete and takes his crucifix out o' Pete's hand. He kisses the crucifix, then kicks Pete in the ribs.

"You lousy wop!" he yells. "You tried to steal my crucifix so I'd croak, huh?"

"He made another kick at Pete, but I grabbed him, threw his clothes over his pyjamas and we beat it before the cops come. My mother hid us a couple o' days and borrowed some money for us.

"A girl friend o' mine in Chicago spends her vacations at the Bluebird department store camp near here, so I knew where this place was. I thought if I got Joe out here maybe his lungs would get better, but—"

Maisie Carrol glanced at the grave before her, then buried her face in her hands and sobbed bitterly. Sheriff McKenzie stood up and lighted the stub of his dead cigar.

"You wrote to your mother a few weeks ago, didn't you?" he asked gently.

"Yes," moaned Maisie. "I s'pose the cops got the letter."

The sheriff nodded, but his blue eyes narrowed.

"When did Joe die?" he said quietly.

"Three days ago," sobbed Maisie.

"Have a doctor?"

"N-no. He went too quick."

"Why didn't you take his body back to Chicago?"

"I—I didn't have money enough."

"Why didn't you call the coroner?"

"I—I don't know."

"Bury him yourself?"

"Yes. All alone."

The sheriff shook his head thoughtfully.

"It's too bad," he said. "They didn't want Joe in Chicago."

Like a flash Maisie Carrol jumped up and, gripping the sheriff's arm, glared at him wildly.

"They didn't want him!" she cried.

"Pete Mongone didn't die," explained Sheriff McKenzie. "He—"

But the cabaret girl did not wait for the sheriff to finish his sentence. She leaped across the newly-made grave and waved her arms toward the pine grove.

"Joe!" she screamed exultantly. "Joe! It's all O. K.!"

A dry twig crackled in the pine grove, an overhanging bough was brushed aside and a thin youth, clad in shabby gray trousers, a red sweater and brown cap walked into the clearing back of the cabin.

He plodded slowly over the rocky earth, halting every few feet as a paroxysm of coughing racked his slender body, then he stepped over the fresh grave inscribed "Joe Carrol," and, removing his cap, faced Sheriff McKenzie.

"You Joe Carrol?" asked the sheriff.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, coughing and covering his mouth.

The sheriff's eyes were a steely blue as he handed the youth a paper. Joe Carrol glanced at it and his face turned a ghastly yellow.

"A warrant!" he groaned.

The sheriff nodded.

"Assault with intent to kill Pete Mongone," he replied coolly. "The sheriff of Cook County asked me to serve it on you."

Joe hung his head, and Maisie Carrol threw her arms around his neck.

"I thought the grave business would work, Joe!" she cried frantically. "Honest, I did! I thought if a bull did come my little song and dance would give you time to make a get-away, but the sheriff double crossed me. I'll go back with you, Joe!"

Joe Carrol coughed, and a spasm of pain shot across his white face.

"I'll go with you," he said to the sheriff.

But Sheriff McKenzie smiled grimly as he took the warrant from Joe's fingers.

"You won't go with me, son," he said gently. "I said the sheriff of Cook County asked me to serve this warrant on you. I didn't say I'd serve it. The law says there's a difference between talking and doing."

He mused silently for a moment, then took out his fountain pen, unscrewed the cap and glanced down at the empty grave. His blue eyes twinkled.

"You've been dead and buried, son," he chuckled, "so I suppose I ought to make my return on this warrant 'Dead' but—"

He scrawled "Not Found" on the back of the warrant and held it up.

"That means I couldn't find you, Joe," he explained, "when the tenth assistant deputy sheriff of Cook County reads that he'll pigeonhole the warrant and forget all about it in a week."

The sheriff grinned.

"Shucks," he went on, "assault to kill ain't no more serious in Chicago than drinking a cup of weak tea."

Joe and Maisie Carrol stared dumbly at Sheriff Bob McKenzie for a few seconds, then, their eyes wet and their faces bright, they lunged at him with open arms.

But the sheriff quickly edged around the side of the cabin and made for the bridge across the creek.

"I got to get back to town to draw a venire!" he called over his shoulder: "If you want anything tell the store-keeper and he'll give it to you. I'll be back in a few days to see you."

Safe on the other side of the creek, he lighted a cigar and gazed back at the boy and girl who stood watching him, their arms around each other.

"This climate'll fix you up, son!" he shouted, "but don't let your wife bury you again. If I let mine do that she'd never dig me out."



Handwriting Notice

Handwriting analyses sent by John Fraser to the following have been returned to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY office marked "wrong address." If correct addresses are sent, the letters will be forwarded:

John Richard Brookes, 5 Atlantic Avenue, Old Orchard, Maine; Miss Ruth Cutshew, 2325 Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois; Care of W. N. Wilkie, William Murray Findlay, Canada; C. H. Rier, Lakemere, Ohio; Alfred John Sherer, 125 East Eighty-Sixth Street, New York, N. Y.; I. M., Chicago, Illinois; Miss Edith Abel, 151 South Seventh Street, Faubusville, Ohio; George D. Williams, Springfield, Massachusetts; Miss Rita Powers, 2 West Fifty-Ninth Street, New York, N. Y.; Miss

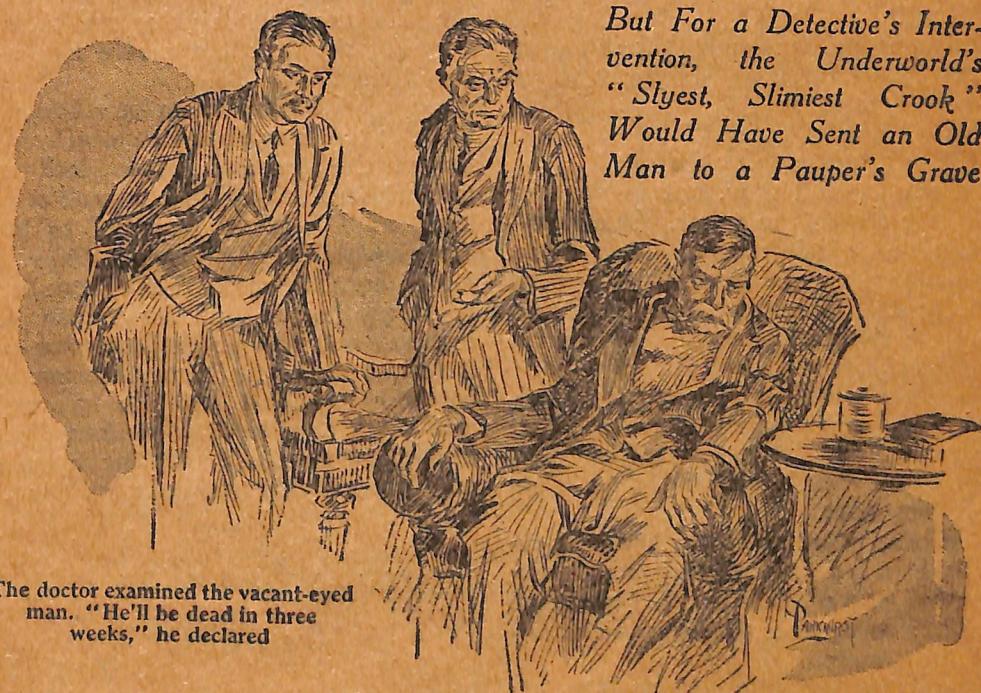
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International Crooks I Have Known

SLIPPERY SAM, AMBULANCE CHASER

By Captain Charles H. Moss

But For a Detective's Intervention, the Underworld's "Slyest, Slimiest Crook" Would Have Sent an Old Man to a Pauper's Grave



The doctor examined the vacant-eyed man. "He'll be dead in three weeks," he declared

JUST after midnight, I found him lying in a heap before the door. It was bitterly cold; snow was falling, and behind me the sea lashed itself to a fury under the scourge of the northeast wind.

That is my introduction to a human story I was later to unravel and which, to-day, I remember in every detail.

James MacDougall was a man of some sixty-five years of age, tall and of some presence. He wore a gray beard and, when I met him, was living in a well furnished flat in a block of mansions at Hove. Temporarily, I was living in the same block.

When I found him he was as one dead, and even as I dragged him into the hall and up the stairs, I feared that I had found him too late. His keys were hanging from the end of a chain in his trousers pocket.

I dragged him into his bedroom and on to his bed, switched on the electric fire, undressed him, poured brandy down his throat and set to work on him, but it was an hour and a half before he showed any sign of life, and three hours before I was able to leave him, tucked comfortably between blankets and fast asleep.

The next morning, the hall porter

told me that MacDougall wished to see me. Inside his flat again, he was profuse in his thanks, and afterward he looked at me, I thought somewhat strangely, and asked:

"When you searched me, did you find any money?"

"No," I answered.

"I had twelve or thirteen pounds on me when I left the 'Old Ship,'" he explained. "Some one must have stolen it."

Some one had—and that some one was Sam Crockett—"Slippery" Sam to his associates.

Crooked as Snakes

Sam is dead now, but in spite of that he remains to me what he was—the slyest, slimiest crook I ever knew. Usually there are redeeming features in crooks. Some of the worst of men from a criminal point of view are the most charming of individuals to meet when one is off duty—generous, good-natured, genial and irresponsible. One can often at least be amused by them, but there was nothing amusing about Slippery Sam.

When, later, as this story will relate, I had occasion to investigate the case of James MacDougall, I unearthed a story as mean and despicable as any of my career.

Sam Crockett had been a solicitor's clerk in one of those offices which possesses an excellent knowledge of the law and how to dodge it, of fraud which is legally protected. It specialized in accident cases. It bribed hall-porters at hospitals to keep it informed of accidents; it had runners bringing in information from mean and splendid streets—all so that the office might get at the victim first and become empowered to act on his behalf in the matter of compensation.

That office was adept at concocting evidence; it had on its books the names and addresses of a score of professional witnesses—men and women who could swear to facts they had never

seen and tell a primed story with an air of conviction.

Slippery had been chief clerk, and in course of time he had blackmailed victims of accidents whose cases the office had won for a goodly share of the damages awarded. Finally Sam, with two or three thousand pounds in his pocket, had retired from drudgery in London and taken himself, his money, and his wits to Brighton with the firm intention of using the last to augment the first and secure him an easy living.

Such is the man, whom later I found to be in the background on which was thrown the figure of James MacDougall, whom I left at Hove a week or so later, as I believed, restored to the same health he had ever possessed.

Six months elapsed. Then Hove had to be my home again for a time. I inquired and was given possession of a furnished flat in the same house as before. I walked into the hall and into the lift. The man in charge expressed pleasure at seeing me again—and before the lift stopped at my floor, he said:

Something Was Wrong

"It's a sad thing about Mr. MacDougall, sir!"

"Oh, what's the matter with him?" I asked.

The lift stopped and he strode with me on to the landing.

"He goes into the workhouse to-morrow," he explained—and went on when I showed surprise: "Yes, poor old chap, he's lost his memory; he's failing; he's got no money; the bailiffs have cleared his flat—he's down and out, utterly broken—and to-morrow they are calling for him."

Within my new abode, I digested this information over lunch. Then I called to the hall porter and told him to ask MacDougall to come up and see me. MacDougall came, though it was with difficulty that I got him to recognize me.

In place of the hale, well-set-up man, there was a decrepit individual who looked half insane and veritably on his last legs. He could answer no questions.

Formerly he had been a man with a good income, now old age was upon him and poverty.

I could not believe it. Some sixth sense told me that somewhere something was wrong. Perhaps the small adventure of the winter had made me more than usually interested in the man. Whatever the cause, I determined he should not die in the workhouse.

A Leap in the Dark

Within a few hours, I had seen the manager of the building, arranged with him that the man should be allowed to stay, undertaken some small liability on his behalf, and seen the bailiffs and secured from them the return of a part of the beautiful furniture and silver which they had seized for a paltry debt of some twenty-five pounds.

"You're a fool to do it," said the manager with a gesture. "I tell you flatly, I've investigated and he has no friends, no relatives; he knows nobody, nobody knows him, he's got no money, he's down and out and a sick man into the bargain."

My answer was to send for a doctor I knew. He came and examined the slobbering, vacant-looking man I had known in better days.

"He'll be dead in three weeks," he declared.

So I had to get to work quickly. I went down into his flat and examined everything in it. Nothing interested me except an old portmanteau, which was crammed full of old letters—the stamps on which, at least I thought, were worth enough to keep him for three weeks. I examined these letters, and during that and the following two days, I wrote some scores of letters to people who had written to him, asking them for information. I did not re-

ceive a single reply. Truly, I thought, MacDougall is broke and friendless.

But there was one thing more that had attracted my attention.

Among a heap of rubbish I found an old dirty blank check. What was it doing there? Search as I would, I could find no check book, nor a pass-book, nor anything else that would give me the smallest clew to work upon. Still I could not understand that blank check, old and torn as it was. So I acted on it.

Walking into the branch of the bank concerned, I asked to see the manager. I asked him if James MacDougall had an account with them. At first I could get no information, then came the guarded news that there was such an account, but that MacDougall was dead, and who was I?

"On the contrary, MacDougall is very much alive," I said, "and"—taking a leap in the dark—"I want also to see his deed box."

The manager looked at me shrewdly and inquired:

"Where's your authority?"

A True Tale

I told him my story, but he was stubborn. So I returned to the flats, saw a solicitor, and in a few minutes a power of attorney had been made out in my name. I returned to the bank and the deed box was produced.

But I had no key to open it, and it was only after a long argument that, at length, I was permitted to have it forced open in the manager's presence.

Inside were securities valued at nearly seven thousand pounds, together with a passbook denoting another account containing funds belonging to the man whom a day or two ago had been at the door of the workhouse. From this point, the—I hardly dare call it an investigation—went on, and the end of this side of the story was that I placed MacDougall in a home of his own, provided him with medical attention, and two manservants to look

after him—and he lived for some months.

Then on his death came Sam Crockett with a will made out in his favor by James MacDougall. He went to the solicitor, who had never heard of nor seen him until that day. The solicitor got hold of me. We conferred and we decided not to admit the will without finding out something more about Mr. Crockett.

The facts as I have reported them earlier in this article came slowly. From that point they came even more slowly, but at last I was able to present a true story which caused Mr. Crockett to disappear hurriedly when we faced him with police interference.

He had met old MacDougall at the "Old Ship" Hotel. The old man, without a friend in the world, was making a habit of putting in his time almost entirely at this well known inn.

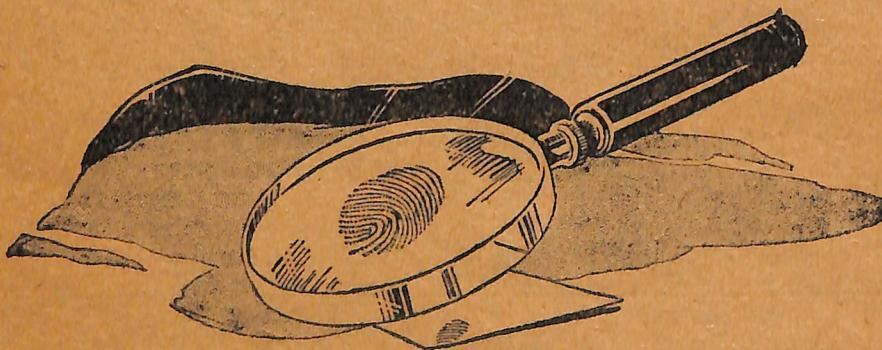
Crockett had watched him and made inquiries and the end of it was that he began to make himself agreeable. Slowly and very carefully, he worked his way into the old fellow's confidence, plying him steadily with drink until, in his cups, MacDougall was at his mercy.

First Crockett abstracted his check-

book and other personal papers; then he worked on until he had removed every shred of identification; then he tried to induce him to sign the will in his favor. But he had been too anxious. MacDougall could not have been so drunk as he appeared at that time, and he refused with scorn to do anything of the kind. What actually he said to the crook will never be known, but such was the effect of his expressed contempt that the crook slipped something into his glass, took him home on that bitterly cold night, robbed him, and went home to forge his signature quite sure in his own mind, that in the morning MacDougall would be found dead in the street.

That is the story. It does not pretend to deal with the adventures of a detective in his business of searching for crooks, nor does it tell of the spectacular episodes in the life of a wrong 'un of international repute. It is merely a true tale of what has happened at Hove and which might well have happened to any man.

A torn and dirty blank check, an old man with one foot in the grave—and Slippery Sam, the slimiest scoundrel I have ever known.



Fill out the coupon in the Handwriting Department in back of the magazine and send it to us at 280 Broadway, New York City, with a two-cent stamp for return postage.

John Fraser, one of the country's foremost graphologists, will send you a personal letter analyzing your character from your penmanship.

DISTINGUISHED COMPANY

For those who read

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

The World's "BIG MEN" Read Detective Fiction.

J. P. Morgan Returns Unheralded on Ship After Month's Yachting Cruise in Levant

J. P. Morgan returned last night on the Cunarder Aquitania entirely unheralded, either on the advance list or the passenger list issued on the voyage. Apparently the banker spent his time in the royal suite reading detective stories, his favorite pastime, and did not go out on deck to mingle with the other passengers, as his

Morrow Eases
His Day With
Detective Stories

Ambassador to Mexico Calls
for Mystery Literature
When Forbidden to Work

WHAT PEOPLE ASK CONCERNING HOOVER

Here Are Answers to Some of
the Questions About the
Nominee's Personality

next.

Does he read much? A great deal.

What kind of books? Science, economics, biography, detective stories.

Has he much of a library? Yes. A large one in Palo Alto

A RELIEF FROM LEARNING.

When Chief Justice Taft set out recently for his Summer home in Canada he was asked what reading would be a part of his recreation. After mentioning that he did not care particularly for novels, he said: "I do not mind detective stories, if I can get a good one." And he has read many of them. A mystery story seems to be the only type of fiction with a completely universal appeal.

Kellogg Reads Detective Stories on Ship, Resting After Strenuous Days in Europe

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ON BOARD THE Leviathan, Sept. 5.—With his treaty to renounce war finally locked in the Leviathan's strongbox and with a ten days' lege, Northfield, Minn. Mr. Kellogg has refused nearly all requests to make speeches following his return, but since the hall is in memory of

George Bernard Shaw, one of the greatest living literary figures, enjoys detective fiction; so do Lloyd George and the famous criminal lawyer, Clarence Darrow. Tales of detectives were Woodrow Wilson's favorite reading in hours of relaxation.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

(Formerly Flynn's)

is the most interesting and gripping detective magazine you can buy.

CHARACTER REVEALED IN YOUR HANDWRITING

EDITOR'S NOTE — After making character analysis, through handwriting, his hobby for more than a score of years, John Fraser has recently won wide renown in New York City as a popular lecturer on this subject.

He conducts a thriving business of analyzing character in handwriting at one dollar a specimen and many not-



JOHN FRASER

ables in this country and abroad have complimented him on the accuracy of his findings.

By special arrangement his personal analysis is free to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers. A handwriting specimen must be sent on the coupon in this department and accompanied by two-cent stamp for reply.

Here's your specimen of my handwriting as it is. If you want to be a real detective suggest that you get a specimen of the handwriting of all the

Joseph A. Warren, Police Commissioner, New York City—Your handwriting bespeaks an analytical mind, which is both reasoning and deductive. By the formation of your capital "H" you display a self-dependent nature, backed up by intellectual force. It also reveals a brotherliness which is magnetic in its influence. Though friendly and fraternal in your manner, there lies behind it a dignified demeanor which commands attention and respect. Your intuitive ability is very pronounced by the way your small letters are pointed on top.

Your "N," which resembles a "U," connotes good nature, and one who is easy to get along with. It is very evident you are not easily influenced by public or private sentiment. You have a mind and a will of your own, and both are in good working order at the

present moment. Moreover, you appear to be a man of great animation; full of ardor and good humor. Your memory serves you well. You seem to have a faculty for remembering faces and incidents.

Furthermore, you are generous-hearted. Your hand seems to be forever in your pocket, judging by the loops on your "Y's," which in most cases don't cross to the right side of the stem.

Needless to say, you have a temper. It is the kind of anger which grows in strength.

These shaded "T" bars give you away in this respect. Like many another of your type, you take work very seriously.

Certainly your good qualities are well in the majority, which leads me to say by your influence and example, you

will leave the world a great deal better than you found it.

*Such an article
you refer to
be intensely*

William H. Funston, Chief of Police, Schenectady, N. Y.—Your calligraphy implies that you are a person possessing lofty ideals. There is a fine breadth of vision and liberality of spirit about you. Your well-balanced spaces between the letters and words reveal excellent judgment and great strength of purpose. Your tapering words are indicative of swift mental action.

Self-esteem is very much in evidence in your make-up. This is noticeable by the size of your capitals. You have imagination plus.

Your long-looped "Y" gives me an inkling of your abundance of physical energy. I believe you assert yourself wherever you go. Your opinion of men and things would be worth listening to.

These broken words of yours lead me to say that you often work on the impulse of the moment. I observe also that your power of intuition is uncanny.

Your buoyant disposition disqualifies you for a seat on the "mourners' bench." As to your foibles, I don't think they amount to much. I wish you the best of luck.

*Enclosed
regarding Dan Mai
Copy for future Co
museums*

Devillo H. Curnalia, Chief of Police, Norwich, N. Y.—Your penmanship indicates that you are a man who is at all times keen and alert. You are the hallmark of efficiency, and a director of men. Your widespread capitals demon-

strate the fact that you have implicit faith in your own ability. The width of the letters speaks loudly of your friendliness and approachable disposition.

Strong will power seems to dominate your nature. When you say "No" you require no gun to convince your hearers.

Then again you have the courage of your convictions, and you stand four-square for them. Your long terminals suggest a tendency to suspicion. You don't believe in swallowing line, hook and sinker until you get the pros and cons of the whole matter.

You appear to be quite a talker, and a convincing one at that. You have also been blessed with a sense of humor. With your sane and sensible outlook on life, coupled with your force of character, you are destined to go far and accomplish much for the well being of your community.

*Here's yours
of my handwriting
as requested. (*

Herbert S. Myers, Chief of Police, Ogdensburg, N. Y.—I observe by your large handwriting that you are a man who is interested in big things. Though you may have a faculty for detail—and no doubt you have—you consider things in the mass rather than in the unit. The straight base line with your letters of equal size tell distinctly of your sincerity, straightforwardness and industry. That mighty "H" of yours speaks louder than words of your self-dependence and ability to think for yourself.

You don't seem to have much patience now and again, judging by your long beginning strokes. The tightly closed "O" tells of your shrewdness and sagacity. You can be as close as a clam, and as silent as a man in a

waxworks when you like. That's what the world calls "tact."

The reversal of your upstroke on the "F" shows how inquisitive you are. A man in your position who glances neither to the right hand nor the left, would be like a suet pudding without flour. There would be nothing to it.

Regarding the sentimental side of your nature, you have been blessed with a "big" heart and plenty of affections. The dash above your "I" bespeaks an excitable mind, and a brain which works twenty-four hours a day. You are all man and no gristle. More power to you.

*Dear Sir:—In answer
of August 3d will go
to Missouri, but Mr. Fra
Mr. Fraser can't tell him
by looking at him, & he
in order to judge him*

F. A. Hoefert, Chief of Police,
North Tonawanda, N. Y.—Your pen-

manship informs me that you are blessed with a quick, active mind. The type which believes in working day and night. There is nothing bombastic about you.

The frequent use of your capitals leads me to suggest that your middle name should be "Amiability."

And your exuberant spirit and natural inherent appetite for amusement are clearly indicated in your ascending lines.

You are a prudent man. You know when to speak, and what to say. You are also suspicious and distrustful of human nature. You are a "doubting Thomas" all the time. Your short, curtailed terminals bespeak this trait in you.

On the other hand, your wide-open "O's" tell me at once that you are no hypocrite. You would be incapable of double-dealing in any sense of the word.

The dashes over the "I's" are indicative of a quick, impulsive mind.

The best man in the world is only human, so your town can congratulate itself.

Handwriting must be on the coupon, accompanied by a TWO-CENT STAMP. Unless the stamp is sent no analysis can be returned to the reader.

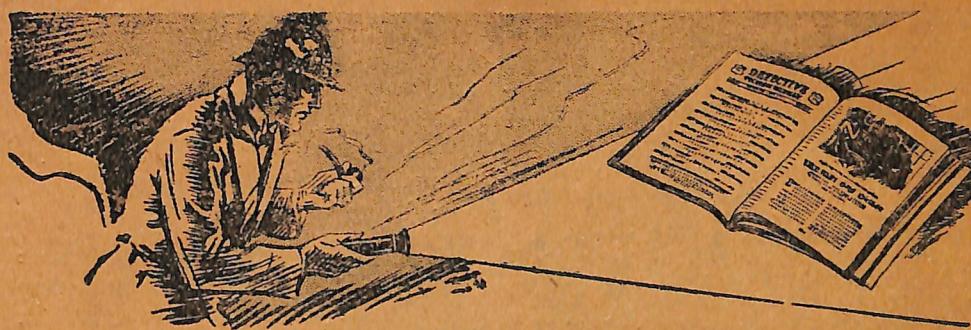
To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway, N. Y. City

This coupon is NOT GOOD
after October 27

Signature.....

Street..... City.....

Occupation..... Are you married?



FLASHES FROM READERS

*Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

RUNNING a police department calls for brain and backbone.

These are two things that American police chiefs have aplenty, according to John Fraser, handwriting analyst of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Mr. Fraser has been gathering specimens of the handwriting of police chiefs in a nationwide survey. He is analyzing them to demonstrate the intelligence, grit, tact, and natural leadership of American police executives.

This week Mr. Fraser devotes his department, Character Revealed in Your Handwriting, to taking apart some police executives' handwriting and bringing to light the qualities that have brought these men the responsibility for the safety of their communities.

You will find it an unusual and interesting study.

Mr. Fraser will follow it up in succeeding issues.

A gun-wise reader from the West shoots in some interesting talk about guns and bullets.

Tom Manley, who writes this letter from Omaha, says "In my time in the West, all saloon men, bartenders, gamblers, dealers of games, cowboys, many citizens carried guns on them day in

and out." Tom Manley should know what he's talking about.

DEAR EDITOR:

Regarding letter from A. D. E. Bullets from rifles in many cases do *whine*, but one doesn't hear the sound until after the projectile has passed by either to one side or overhead. Some pistol bullets *hiss* when passing. The theory that bullets do not whine until *spent* is the bunk. It is the high speed that makes friction that causes the whine or hiss.

A good many years ago when wild geese were thick out here, we had a neighbor who lived a quarter mile from us on the adjoining farm. He had a rifle and often fired at flocks of geese flying between our place and his. The geese would be seventy-five or a hundred yards up in the air, so there was no danger of him hitting anybody except with a spent bullet which would be practically harmless by the time it made its arc to the ground.

Time and again I have watched this man shoot at flocks of geese and often heard the whine of the bullet as it passed high overhead in the direction of our home. I don't think he ever killed a goose that way, but he kept trying.

I am not prepared to say that all rifle bullets will whine, but certainly some of them will. Anything traveling at the speed of a bullet will make some sort of sound because of friction. Take a rope end, just a few feet in length, whirl it rapidly and it will produce considerable noise; whirl it gently and it produces none.

I spent many years in the wild and woolly West among gun toters. I have seen many a man hit with a gun, but never with the *butt*. They know better. Here is one of many reasons, some of which you have explained in your article.

When a man wants to hit a man with a gun, he yanks it out and cracks down, and he doesn't have time to change ends if he wanted to,

which no one but a tenderfoot would do. While he was changing ends the other fellow could wallop him or kill him, for that matter.

Another reason is that the barrel of a gun is a very poor handhold, the barrel being slick and too small to afford a solid grip. The way the old-timers hit a man with a forty-five was with the barrel and cylinder combined, making a club, and they rarely failed to down their man.

If fictionists would stop to think a moment they would see the absurdity of using the butt of a gun, for in all cases, the barrel with the cylinder is much heavier than the butt with its skeleton framework and rubber or wood butt plates.

I hope this will appeal to you and your readers, because you can easily prove my statements, at least the latter. In my time in the West, all saloonmen, bartenders, gamblers, dealers of games, cowboys, many citizens, carried guns on them day in and out. Some wore them in holsters, others just stuck them in the trousers band on one hip; some inside the vest or shirt. When the automatic came in, many traded their forty-fives for the new gun and wore them in hip-pocket holsters. An automatic is hard to carry without a holster except in a coat pocket, and in the old days a man would be killed several times while he was getting out his gun if he carried it in a coat pocket or hip holster. Times have changed. The modern gunman carries his in a coat pocket or a sling under the armpit.

Yours truly,

TOM MANLEY,
Omaha, Neb.

NO BEDTIME STORIES!

Herrick Paulsen, of Los Angeles, doesn't see how stories about detectives and crime can be turned into bedtime stories—at any rate, not the kind to put the reader to sleep.

DEAR EDITOR:

Have just read the edition of August 25, and it seems to me that in "Flashes from Readers" you are getting all kinds of Hades from several readers.

Now I figure this way. That it is impossible to satisfy everybody, especially in the line of reading; some like this author, and some like the other "fella." Though I will admit, with Guy Smith, that it is hard to teach a old bowwow new tricks.

As to your true fact stories, most of them are right interesting. Yes, they are mostly or all of them murder tales. But I don't see that they are any worse than what the newspapers are full of every day, and most people seem to take pleasure in reading them there.

I don't rightly see how any story, whether true or fiction, that has to do with crime and police can be turned into a bedtime story.

Old *Bemis* is both a smart and a mighty nice old gink. I like him a heap. Stories about *Riordan*, *Tug Norton*, and *Calhoun* are always good. My respects to *Ellis Parker*. He

is evidently a first-class policeman in every way.

Best wishes and regards, and more power to your pens.

Yours very truly,

HERRICK PAULSEN,
Los Angeles, Cal.

A RUGGLES FAN

The bright young reader who wrote the following letter can whoop a few times at the information that Captain Walter Archer Frost is again writing Ruggles stories and they will soon begin to appear in these pages.

DEAR EDITOR:

I am fourteen years old and have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for over a year and have not yet found a more interesting book. At home we all read it. Mother, brother, and myself, and I suppose the other brother will, too, when he's old enough. I want to say something about the article sent in by a gentleman who denounced the *Anthony Trent* novels and the *Ruggles* and *Crane* stories. I liked them both, *Ruggles* especially, as they describe so well many strange and foreign poisons and the different instruments of death used by the enemies of *Ruggles*.

Lately two new sets of stories have come out which we all like. The *Ellis Parker* and *Peter Pepper* stories. *Dizzy McArthur* was good, too, and other stories such as the "Red Parrot" and "The Blue Chrysanthemum."

I used to think the *Whitcher* stories were great, but I think they are rather silly now and too much alike. The fact stories are one of the most important parts in the magazine, and the handwriting department next.

Here's hoping you get any number of readers. They don't know what they're missing when they pass up DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Yours sincerely,

WINIFRED CLARKE,
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

MISSING

M. J. D. Anna very ill. Send money. I will make no trouble for you. Write R. O'Brien.

Roy. Please let me hear from you. Everything is all right GIRL.

Fred Hutchinson—Last heard of in a New Orleans hospital three years ago. Please inform his brother, Charles L. Hutchinson, 1050 9th Ave., Honolulu, T. H.

Mrs. Nat Harlon Hill—Please write your daughter, Mrs. Edna Farris Cassity; was adopted by Mrs. J. W. Farris, Decatur, Texas, about 30 years ago. Information appreciated by Mrs. Edna Cassity, General Delivery, Ponca City, Okla.

Edd Foster—Where are you? Did you go to war? Let me hear from you as early as possible. Your father, Abendage Foster, Hermansville, Miss., Route 1—Box 37.

Ralph or Mildred—if you read this please write, as it is of importance. Have covered about 4,000 miles. Address Private Everett Campbell, Company C, 19th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, T. H.

Alfred Anderson—Disappeared seven years ago; may be in New York; was born in Sweden. Please inform his daughter, Mamie Anderson, 3800 East Colfax, N. J. Sanatorium, Denver, Col.

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

IN many instances important clews to the solution of cryptograms are found in short words. And this is especially true of words of two and three letters. In the accompanying table of two-letter words, the arrangement is alphabetical both for initial and final letters. In this way words which begin and end in the same letter can quickly be located and compared.

ah,am,an,as,at,ax,ay	A	fa, ha, la, ma, pa
be, by	B	
do	D	
ch, em, en	E	be, he, me, re, we, ye
fa	F	if, of
go	G	
ha, he, hi, ho	H	ah, eh, oh
if, in, is, it	I	hi, mi, pi, si, ti
la, lo	L	
ma, me, mi, my	M	am, em
no	N	an, en, in, on
of, oh, on, or, os, ox	O	do, go, ho, lo, no, so, to, yo
pa, pi	P	up
re	R	or
si, so	S	as, is, os, us
ti, to	T	at, it
up, us	U	
we	W	
ye, yo	X	ax, ox
	Y	ay, by, my

This short list is not intended to be exhaustive. Obsolete and foreign words, proper names, abbreviations, *et cetera*, have been omitted. Nevertheless, the table will be found useful on many occasions. The first cryptogram here has been especially designed to give you a work-out in two-letter words. Note that one letter occurs as initial and final in four of the five two-letter words in this example. Other comparisons will also be illuminating.

This Week's Cryptograms

Once you get the two-letter words, solution of this crypt becomes merely

a problem of substitution and context. Try it for fun.

NH HN DPPNAHE WGNATX BNA
QDYT EN WNTJM EGYW PCBOENS-
CDR YQ BNA ECB PNTTDEYNH
DHX DHDTBWYW NQ WGNCE
KNCXW.

By John R. Edwards. Note that the predominating symbol, O, also occurs doubled. What letter might this signify? Also try analysis of the third and twelfth words.

FIGHTER WED MAMDOOR ZENO
OCOGDENIC JEDOT DUIR FEUR
KLARGX IQIZT YLD CIDDON PER
SNAVO IRQ YOGIZO TABDU SNOT-
AQORD.

By Dr. Geo. P. Wood. You have here the two-letter word, YX, used as part of the suffix -YXU. What are these likely to be?

AWSBKLI BSXNYXU CGKR DWOWV
EGSXVW FYBNBQ; GSRESUW
HEKX ISXNI JHYLW KOBETYKH!
LK MWVGJ NYGWVLWN OQ PSXN-
IKRW QKHXU RSLGKXI SXN TSG-
YWN UGKHEI VKXLSYXXU WBN-
WGBQ XKLSOBWI YX ZYBLI.

Last Week's Answers

You can quickly get a good start with this cryptogram by guessing some of the short words.

I certainly do agree with Edgar Allan Poe, for the human mind is surely ingenious.

Perplexed poets undoubtedly encounter extraordinary difficulties in rhyming innocuous desuetude with sanitary crematory.

Answers to this week's cryptograms will be published next week. Answers and new cryptograms are pouring in at a lively rate. Keep them coming!



COMING NEXT WEEK!

SOMETHING stirred in front of the speeding lights of young Harry Lane's roadster.

He jammed on the four-wheel brakes and grabbed a revolver from the door pocket.

A man was in the road crawling toward him. His face looked ghastly in the headlights' blinding glare. He groaned and fumbled in his pocket.

"Here, get this to McCoy, police headquarters, New York, quick!"

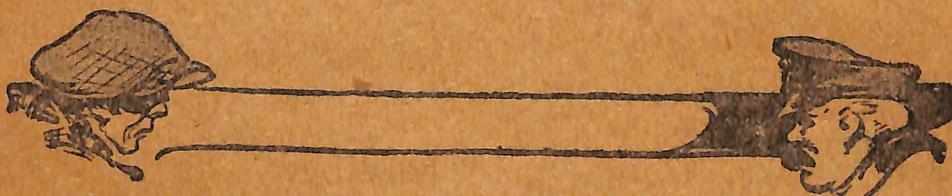
"Never mind me. Move on—before they stop you! It's big—"

From the roadside revolvers spat at young Lane viciously—and the big adventure he was about to cross the Atlantic to find had turned up under his very nose.

It's an exciting story of a master-criminal who called himself "The Governor" and laughed as he warned police in advance what he would do—and did it!

Be sure to start "The Man Who Never Blundered," by Sinclair Gluck, next week.

You'll find it packed to the brim with exciting detective adventure!



And there are a host of other lively tales in the same issue.

The short stories include "By a Nose," by the popular writer of prison articles, Joseph Fulling Fishman; "Queer Money," by John Wilstach; and the next of the favorite Oriental mysteries of Chanda-Lung, by Edmund Snell.

Also there's an interesting selection of true stories, among which is another of Joseph Gollomb's famous cases, "The Three Cheats."

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